

SPORT

**HAMILTON
FIFTH AS
LECLERC
TAKES POLE
IN BAHRAIN**
PAGE 18



GONZALO FUENTES/REUTERS

25 13
FRANCE ENGLAND



**Antoine Dupont
scores France's
third try at the
Stade de France**

Southgate: Gay fans' fear of Qatar is horrible

Jonathan Northcroft

Gareth Southgate expects a number of female and LGBTQ+ England supporters to be dissuaded from travelling to the Qatar World Cup because of concerns about their safety, a prospect he described as "horrible."

Southgate suggested that he and his England players are preparing to take a stand on human rights ahead of November's tournament, and strongly rejected a claim by Amnesty International that the Football Association are 'complacent' about human rights issues. He said he wants his squad to "use their voice" about Qatar – but in a measured way.

Southgate's squad will be briefed this week when they meet up for friendlies against Switzerland and Ivory Coast. Their manager has been doing his own research, and appears to have identified inclusivity and supporter safety as key areas to potentially campaign on. "I found it quite overwhelming to piece together without having done research [but] I'm quite clear on the areas of concern," Southgate said.

After first mentioning workers' rights and the building of Qatar's World Cup stadiums – during which 37 migrant workers have died (6,500 have died in all construction work) – Southgate said: "Then there are the issues that potentially threaten our fans when they travel: the rights of women and the rights of the LGBTQ+ community in particular."

"Sadly, through discussions that I've had, I don't think some of those communities are going to go and that's a great shame. We stand for inclusivity as a team and it would be horrible to think some of our fans feel they can't go because they feel threatened or they're worried about their safety. There needs to be some clarity and some better communication that they are going to be safe, because they're not feeling that."

The squad is expected to take a group position on what – if any – action to take on Qatar, with the voices of Harry Kane, Jordan Henderson and Raheem Sterling's set to be influential.

FOOTBALL COVERAGE, PAGES 8-15

Slammed!

England finish with losing record for second season running as France sign off in grand fashion, pages 2-5

Villa lead race for £60m midfielder Phillips

Jonathan Northcroft

Aston Villa have emerged as frontrunners to sign Calvin Phillips this summer and are ready to pay a £60 million transfer fee, plus an enormous salary, to prise the England midfielder away from Leeds United.

The Midlands side have identified the 26-year-old as a key target in their continuing efforts to upgrade their squad to a level to consistently challenge for a place in the top six of the Premier League.

They are prepared to offer Phillips a package worth in the region of £10 million a year to leave his boyhood

club and are thought to be ahead of rival suitors Newcastle United and West Ham United in the scramble to attract the player.

Phillips' contract at Elland Road expires in 2024 and he may yet stay at Leeds, whose new manager Jesse Marsch declared last week he "would love to keep" the player. Rather than decide on his future, Phillips has been focusing on returning to fitness, having been out of action with a hamstring injury since December 5.

He was an unused substitute in Leeds' remarkable comeback 3-2 victory away to Wolves on Friday that left the club seven points clear of the

relegation zone. Phillips is also admired at Old Trafford but a move there is regarded as almost impossible given the deep antipathy between Manchester United and Leeds.

The midfielder has the personality and drive that the Villa manager Steven Gerrard is keen on. Gerrard bemoaned a lack of those qualities following his side's 1-0 defeat at home by Arsenal yesterday.

Leeds have identified several targets, including Swansea City's impressive former England Under-20 midfielder, Flynn Downes, as potential replacements for Phillips should he move on after 12 years at the club.

FRANCE DO IT IN GRAND FASHION

STEPHEN JONES



Rugby Correspondent
At Stade de France

France have their Grand Slam, England have a bronze medal but if they bit into it it would fall apart in their mouths. They finished in the top three only because of Italy's sensational win in Wales. And all those with high hopes or even a few euros on France for the World Cup will celebrate this slam but become decidedly nervous. France were clearly suffering horrendously with nerves before the match; an interview with the superb Cameron Woki found him speechless. France could have dominated this game and put England away by a mighty margin but they fretted and frittered and made bad calls on and off the field. At one stage, it even seemed as if England might manage to stop the slam or at least win a bonus point. As they did against Ireland, and this time without the help of bad referee-

ing decisions, England played with courage and wit. Jamie George, Sam Simmonds, Ellis Genge and Freddie Steward deserve a much better arena and platform than Eddie Jones has ever given them or is ever likely to. In the end, a bizarre England selection did their best but had no real weapons to throw. Sadly, the Marcus Smith experiment by Jones has yielded so little. He was brought in, so it was said, on the basis of his splendid running game at Harlequins and he spent all of yesterday evening either shuffling sideways or kicking the ball away. It must have been murder to play outside him. Good luck to Smith and may he bounce back in the future but he has done nothing that would have been beyond George Ford or Owen Farrell, and both those players have more to offer in the tea room than the young Harlequin. There was the occasional decent forward drive, and brave tactical call – to have the massive Ellis Genge stand right at the back alongside the full-back and motor upfield having caught the long kicks. It was hardly a disguised move – all that was lacking was the blue flashing light on his head – but fair play to Genge for giving it a go and to Courtney Lawes and Sam Simmonds for joining in.



FRANCE PLAYER RATINGS

By Will Kelleher

TOTAL
107/150

MELVYN JAMINET6/10

Caps: 11, Club: Perpignan

Missed two kicks and guilty of forcing things in attack but recovered. A great story, rising from Pro D2

DAMIAN PENAUD6/10

Caps: 32, Club: Clermont

Quiet after scoring three tries before this. Came into things late after giving away a penalty for blocking

GAËL FICKOU8/10

Caps: 71, Club: Racing 92

Earmarked by Shaun Edwards as a future star when a teenager. Jackalling helped the back row and he scored

JONATHAN DANTY7/10

Caps: 15, Club: La Rochelle

Kicked well, to prove he is not just a biffing ball carrier. So powerful to straighten the line. Let Marchant through once

GABIN VILLIÈRE7/10

Caps: 12, Club: Toulon

The 5ft 11in wing was a target for English kicks out to 6ft 5in Steward, but did well. Threat as a jackalling nuisance

ROMAIN NTAMACK7/10

Caps: 28, Club: Toulouse

Some ball-handling sublime, other elements nervy, but showed more in attack than his opposite number, Smith

ANTOINE DUPONT (C)8/10

Caps: 40, Club: Toulouse

Tackled ferociously and was on hand for the crucial third score. His interplay with Alldritt is delightful

CYRIL BAILLE7/10

Caps: 36, Club: Toulouse

Scrum was strong when he was on and some of his handling in the loose was a delight, but not the usual all-court show

JULIEN MARCHAND6/10

Caps: 21, Club: Toulouse

Cannonball hooker was stopped well by English tacklers when he carried. One lineout went astray

UINI ATONIO7/10

Caps: 44, Club: La Rochelle

Won a brilliant scrum penalty against the head in the seventh minute, then another on his own ball later in the half

CAMERON WOKI6/10

Caps: 16, Club: Bordeaux Bègles

Wales managed to disrupt the lineout he runs. England had less joy trying the same trick. Big future ahead

PAUL WILLEMSE7/10

Caps: 24, Club: Montpellier

The lock has added Afrikaans beef to the tight-head side of the scrum behind the massive Atonio. Has grown huge!

FRANÇOIS CROS8/10

Caps: 16, Club: Toulouse

Scored the second French try, an opportunistic effort close to the line. A mean tackler on the blind side

ANTHONY JELONCH8/10

Caps: 19, Club: Toulouse

Worked in tandem with Alldritt to pilfer ball at the breakdown – an area dominated by France. Charging runner too

GRÉGORY ALLDRITT9/10

Caps: 31, Club: La Rochelle

Two early breakdown turnovers set the tone for another masterclass of power and pizzazz. Player of the tournament

DAN SHERIDAN/INPHO



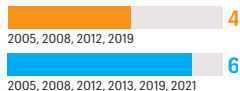
France's Cros stretches to score their second try of the night

I have never heard an anthem sung as loudly or passionately as *La Marseillaise* here before kick-off

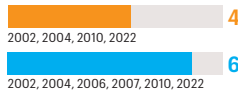
SIX NATIONS KINGS

- Grand slams
- Championships

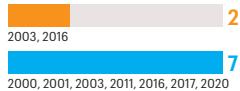
Wales



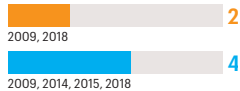
France



England



Ireland



Genge had trouble up front in the second half but appeared undaunted. He was in a team less able and less threatening than any English club team worth its salt. England have never been good enough, nor anything remotely like it.

France have so much more potential. Why you would not use Fickou and Dante in midfield more often is baffling, as is why some of those French forwards found a softness in their game on the day.

But it was a stupendous occasion. The stadium was rocking at least two hours before the kick-off, and as for the pre-match, I have never heard an anthem sung as loudly or as passionately in any sport at any time as the crowd roared out *La Marseillaise*.

The only temptation from the French point of view was to wonder about nerves, whether the hopes and expectations in the stadium and around the nation had made this occasion just too big. Beyond question there were nervous fumbblings in some of the passing throughout the first half.

But France were away 18-6 at the interval, and it is not denying for a moment the courage of England's resistance to say that a 12-point lead was the very least that France deserved.

England came out, as they so often do, with way too much indiscipline, too many simple penalties conceded at the breakdown and lineouts. So even though Genge was already embarked on his series of runs up the back, and although Freddie Steward successfully chased some kicks and won them in the air, England never got momentum and never looked like scoring a try before the break.

Gael Fickou would have scored in the opening moments had he held on to a difficult pass after the English midfield defence was opened like a can of cat meat.

Fickou knocked on and even though Jaminet kicked two penalties England were in it at 11-6 with two shots at goal from Smith.

The nerves showed again when France made a silly choice in electing to go for goal from 60 metres. When-

SIX NATIONS 2022

	P	W	D	L	PD	B	Pts
France	5	5	0	0	68	5	25
Ireland	5	4	0	1	105	5	21
England	5	2	0	3	5	2	10
Scotland	5	2	0	3	-29	2	10
Wales	5	1	0	4	-28	3	7
Italy	5	1	0	4	-121	0	4

February 5

Ireland 29
Wales 7

Scotland 20
England 17

February 6

France 37
Italy 10

February 12

Wales 20
Scotland 17

France 30
Ireland 24

February 13

Italy 0
England 33

February 26

Scotland 17
France 36

England 23
Wales 19

February 27

Ireland 57
Italy 6

March 11

Wales 9
France 13

March 12

Italy 22
Scotland 33

England 15
Ireland 32

March 19

Wales 21
Italy 22

Ireland 26
Scotland 5

France 25
England 13

ever they went through the phases with field position they looked likely to score and although Jaminet hit the ball so sweetly that it almost demolished the dead-ball area, he was wide. So it was as well for France and their inner men that they launched another attack on half-time. Gabin Villiere made space with a delightful dummy followed by a quick pass and Francois Gros scored. Jaminet kicked a beautiful conversion.

If France were in nervy mode in the first half then it became panic at times in the second, when for long periods they almost stopped playing.

They were making twice as many tackles as England and the pressure

was ratcheting up. France were so feeble at the start of the half that they conceded an England try from a rather lumbering move that was electrified later in its development by Joe Marchant and inevitably, Jamie George. Even though Steward had a bit to do when he got the ball on the right his side-step and size took him over and Smith kicked a glorious goal.

And whatever the next stage up from sheer panic is, it was then exhibited by France's coaches.

France had dominated this game but after this one try they sent on a raft of replacements immediately, suggesting to their players on the field that they had lost the confidence of their coaches.

All they had to do was ride it out for a few phases and reset.

It was still obvious that whenever France went through two or three phases they were dangerous, and after Damian Penaud had made some ground, the splendid Gregory Alldritt popped the ball to Dupont who accelerated over at the posts.

Cue the finishing burst? Not at all. England refused to be the audience for the Grand Slam. France again made a nonsensical decision when a hopeless drop-goal attempt failed miserably and Genge was held up over the French line with another England forward drive meeting only limited opposition.

After the Genge thrust it was just playing out time. France looked pleased with themselves at the end, probably too pleased. Anyone in white looking delighted must have missed the obvious fact that this was the end of an era.

Scorers: France: Tries: Fickou (15min), Cros (40), Dupont (61). **Con** Jaminet 2. **Pens** Jaminet (9, 24). **England: Try:** Steward (48). **Con** Smith. **Pens** Smith (20, 30).

France: M Jaminet (T Ramos 76); D Penaud, G Fickou, J Danty, G Villiere; R Ntamack, A Dupont (M Lucu 77); C Baille (JB Gros 49), J Marchand (P Mauvaka 49), U Atonio (M Haouas 54), C Woki (T Flament 72), P Willemsse (R Taofifenua 49), F Cros (D Cretin 72), A Jelonch, G Alldritt.

England: G Furbank (G Ford 77); F Steward, J Marchant, H Slade, J Nowell (E Daly 25); M Smith, B Youngs (H Randall 64); E Genge (J Marler 64), J George, W Stuart (K Synckler 49), M Itoje, N Isiekwe (O Chessum 61), C Lawes, S Underhill (A Dombrandt 64), S Simmonds.

Referee J Peyper (S Africa). **Attendance** 78,750.



ENGLAND
PLAYER
RATINGS

By Alex Lowe

has come he thrives in more space.

TOTAL

95/150

GEORGE FURBANK

6/10

Caps: 6, Club: Northampton Saints

Back at the scene of his inauspicious debut two years ago he made one careless error but was otherwise tidy at the back.



FREDDIE STEWARD

7/10

Caps: 10, Club: Leicester Tigers

Commanding in the air after starting on the wing so England could capitalise on his skills and finished his try well.

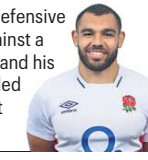


JOE MARCHANT

8/10

Caps: 12, Club: Harlequins

Another strong defensive performance against a big French team and his carries in attack led to England's best moments.



HENRY SLADE

6/10

Caps: 48, Club: Exeter Chiefs

A mixed display from the inside centre who won and conceded a turnover, and kicked well from hand.



JACK NOWELL

6/10

Caps: 38, Club: Exeter Chiefs

Worked hard to get into the game early on and will have feared a yellow card when he collided with Melvyn Jaminet.



MARCUS SMITH

6/10

Caps: 10, Club: Harlequins

His cross-kick radar was off and England looked confused in attack at times. At his best when trying to use his pace..



BEN YOUNGS

6/10

Caps: 117, Club: Leicester Tigers

Brought back into the team for his control and kicking but suffers in comparison to Antoine Dupont.

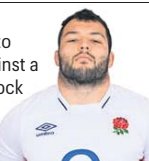


ELLIS GENGE

8/10

Caps: 36, Club: Leicester Tigers

England's chief ball-carrier had to scrummage against a tight-head and lock that weighed over 50 stone.



JAMIE GEORGE

6/10

Caps: 66, Club: Saracens

A day when the Saracens hooker's role was to get stuck in rather than stand out. He hit all his lineouts.



WILL STUART

6/10

Caps: 20, Club: Bath

A high energy performance from the Bath prop who held up well in the set piece and made many carries.



MARO ITOJE

6/10

Caps: 56, Club: Saracens

Was guilty of some poor decisions that led to England conceding two turnovers — but ran a good lineout.



NICK ISIEKWE

6/10

Caps: 7, Club: Saracens

A surprise selection over Joe Launchbury. England's chief lineout receiver grafted hard in engine room.



COURTNEY LAWES (C)

6/10

Caps: 93, Club: Northampton Saints

His calm captaincy in a crisis is to be admired and he tried to lead from the front as England sought a way back.



SAM UNDERHILL

6/10

Caps: 28, Club: Bath

After months out with concussion he put in a mountain of defensive work but it was a tough outing against French.

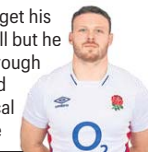


SAM SIMMONDS

6/10

Caps: 14, Club: Exeter Chiefs

Worked hard to get his hands on the ball but he was carrying through heavy traffic and while the physical side of his game



Rugby Union Guinness Six Nations

DAVID WALSH



Chief Sports Writer

When Eddie Jones picked Freddie Steward on England's right wing, it was difficult to see the logic. The more rounded attacking skills of Max Malins were sacrificed for a young player who is good under a high ball but nowhere near as quick as the man he was replacing. It turned out that Jones was right. Steward was outstanding.

Jones's plan had been to launch high kicks into French territory in situations where Steward had a chance of regaining it.

Catching a ball that you are chasing at top speed is one of the game's most difficult skills and yet the 21-year-old Leicester Tiger did it again and again. France just couldn't handle him.

There was a moment in the second half when Steward sprinted 50 metres to catch the ball over Melvyn Jaminet's head and for a moment, it seemed the right wing could single-handedly turn the game England's way.

When he got his one chance to score a try, he changed the angle of his run and used his strength to blast through Gabin Villière's tackle.

Steward is entitled to remember his first night at the Stade de France with fondness. There is no country in the rugby world that makes as much of a big occasion as the French. They use light and sound to create an atmosphere that invites the visiting team to consider that maybe they've come to the right place at the wrong time. Before the national anthem, there was an announcement that the anthem was being sung "pour l'honneur d'équipe de France".

Then right after the line where it says, "the day of glory has arrived," the accompanying music was lowered and then switched off, allowing the 15 French players to hear 80,000 of their compatriots belting out the national anthem. Twelve years since France's last grand slam, the demand for victory seemed overwhelming. Every

VIVE LA FRANCE

Hosts secure the grand slam in Paris but England can hold their heads up high

England fan will have wondered about what they were about to face.

In the circumstances, England started well. Twice in the first two minutes, Sam Underhill got to Melvyn Jaminet and Anthony Jelouch knocked on. It was clear, too, that England had come with a definite idea about how they wanted to play. They'd picked Steward on the wing, so they could kick the ball high for him to chase and then make the catch. Steward did this spectacularly well.

England were also prepared to run at the French defence and though they attacked with more conviction than in any of their previous Six Nations matches, they also ran into the problem that every team encounters against France. Take the ball into contact and you take the risk of losing it to a turnover. The French are masters in the art of the counter-ruck.

Julien Marchand, Gregory Alldritt, Gaël Fickou and Villière are all strong over the ball and only needed a fraction of a second to execute the turnover.

Though England had started well and had more possession, it was France who got the points. Fickou scored the try and it would be difficult to begrudge the centre his moment. He is the leader of the French defence and in his own country is regarded as "the young veteran". Though just 27,



Maxime Lucu, the scrum half replacement, far left, leads the French celebrations after the final whistle in Paris last night

Youngs and England not fast enough to compete

STUART BARNES



How do you take on one of the best defences in the world with a lack of finishing thrust on the wing and an absence of punch in the centre?

Here is one theory. You take to the air. Bring in a scrum half scrabbling around for Test-match form for as long as I can remember, but one with a capacity to box-kick brilliantly on his day; shift a towering full back to the right wing (at least in attack) to chase down the ball, theoretically overpowering a French pocket rocket on the left wing. And to cover the full back's positional switch, recall a gifted full back who endured a nightmare in this very cauldron two years ago but has since re-established himself as a

utility full back/fly half but not the most obvious starter in Paris.

The change of tactics for the last 30 minutes against Ireland was a sign of Eddie Jones's thinking on the hoof. England were getting nowhere with ball in hand. There is nothing wrong with a kicking strategy if that is the best way to win. France did not boot the ball cleverly in Cardiff. If England could win the territorial battle and get to Gabin Villière on the wing and the shaky Melvyn Jaminet at full back, the selection would go down as a master stroke. So much for theory.

They started slow. Two instances summed up the problems of England's tinkering. The first was directly related to the opening try. Freddie Steward was a few metres wider than his usual position but that was sufficient for him to mistime his rush and allow Jaminet to glide outside him. George Furbank was stretched too far to his right. When the ball swept back, he could not make up the distance to

PUMA ARAMBURU SHOT DEAD IN PARIS

Former Argentina and Glasgow Warriors wing Federico Aramburu was killed in Paris early Saturday, the Paris prosecutor's office said. He was 42. Prosecutors confirmed that a murder investigation has been opened.

According to the French sports newspaper, *L'Equipe*, Aramburu was fatally shot in the early hours of Saturday outside a Paris bar after an altercation involving four people including Aramburu and a friend of his.

Aramburu, who made 22 international appearances for Argentina during his career, played for Biarritz, Perpignan and Dax in French club rugby. He won the Top 14 twice with Biarritz, in 2005 and 2006.

stop Gaël Fickou scoring in the other corner. The back three are similar roles but not identical.

Small margins make a massive difference against a team of France's quality. Ben Youngs box kicked with no small degree of accuracy in a first half where France set the pace of the game at their chosen pace. England cannot generate pace because of the ubiquitous box kick. Whereas France kick long to pressurise, England and their scrum half sought to regain possession. They achieved this on three first-half occasions but the net result was more slow possession. The tactic was paying no dividends.

The torpor of England's scrum half in comparison with Antoine Dupont's snap was summed up when he kicked an aimless kick into Grégory Alldritt. France picked up the gift and hammered downfield where Furbank, in Steward's regular position, made a mess and handed France the throw.

THOMAS SAMSON/AFP/GETTY IMAGES



TEAMS OF THE TOURNAMENT

Stephen Jones

15 E Padovani (It)
14 D Graham (Scot)
13 G Fickou (Fr)
12 J Danty (Fr)
11 M Ioane (It)
10 D Biggar (Wales)
9 A Dupont (Fr)
1 C Baille (Fr)
2 J Marchand (Fr)
3 T Furlong (Ire)
4 P Willemsse (Fr)
5 A Beard (Wales)
6 C Lawes (Eng)
7 J van der Flier (Ire)
8 T Faletau (Wales)

Stuart Barnes

15 H Keenan (Ire)
14 D Penaud (Fr)
13 G Fickou (Fr)
12 J Danty (Fr)
11 G Villière (Fr)
10 J Sexton (Ire)
9 A Dupont (Fr)
1 C Baille (Fr)
2 J Marchand (Fr)
3 T Furlong (Ire)
4 W Rowlands (Wal)
5 M Itoje (Eng)
6 C Doris (Ire)
7 M Lamaro (It)
8 G Alldritt (Fr)

Lawrence Dallaglio

15 H Keenan (Ire)
14 D Penaud (Fr)
13 G Fickou (Fr)
12 G Ringrose (Ire)
11 G Villière (Fr)
10 D Biggar (Wales)
9 A Dupont (Fr)
1 C Baille (Fr)
2 J Marchand (Fr)
3 T Furlong (Ire)
4 C Woki (Fr)
5 M Itoje (Eng)
6 C Doris (Ire)
7 A Jelouch (Fr)
8 G Alldritt (Fr)

England will be far from despondent. They played with pace and power, and even daring

he was starting his 11th game against England and always doing the job he is expected to do.

The French deserve the grand slam. They have played the best rugby in an outstanding Six Nations Championship and the Antoine Dupont try that clinched this victory was another fine example of what they can do with the ball in hand. Their off-loading is so well disguised that it can be impossible to defend.

But England can take much from the game. This was by far their best performance in the Championship. As well as Steward, there was Ellis Genge, out of this world. Jones used him like you would a star No 8, stationing him in the back field and inviting to run at the French defence from deep. What prop has ever been given this role in Test rugby and Genge did it while attending to all his other duties.

Maro Itoje, Sam Simmonds and Courtney Lawes all delivered huge performances and though France led all through the match, the mood in the Stade de France only became celebratory in the last five minutes.

Then the home crowd sung *La Marseillaise* and enjoyed their moment of victory. They had played well but they hadn't outplayed England, only beaten them on the scoreboard. At the end, No8 Aldritt picked the ball from the back of a French and booted it into the stand, ending the game. There was joy all around the stadium and more than a little relief among the French players. They had been in a fierce Test match, one they'd never been able to control but their more incisive attacking play had seen them through.

England will be far from despondent. For the first time in this Championship it was possible to get a glimpse of the team that Jones is building. They played with pace and power, skill and even daring. Though beaten, they will remember this as a good night, one where they lost the game but gained so much else.

The Steward switch was a success but in the end it was the vast gulf in class between the two scrum halves that separated the sides

France won the breakdown and one of the key reasons was the speed with which they hit the tackle zone. For too much of the game France were on the front foot and England – playing often with the pause button pressed – could not create the gain line for Marcus Smith who chipped a perfect cross kick into Steward on the right wing. In that moment, here was the grand plan but Youngs lacks the will to accelerate any English effort.

A cumbrous kicking game was not going to work, with France leading 18-6 at the interval. Against Ireland, the running game was banging its collective head against a brick wall. Against France, England needed to produce high quality phases of rugby. When the instinct is to steady the speed of possession, the end is well nigh inevitable.

Youngs finally found a pocket of space. Smith delayed, Henry Slade decoyed and Marchant sliced through. The try was finished off by Steward. Full back or wing, he

knows how to finish. A long clearance found Steward on the right wing. The high kick and chase ended with the Englishman reclaiming possession from the Parisian night sky. Steward had more than atoned for his positional error for the first French try.

The Steward switch was a success. Furbank was not the mini disaster he had been two years ago. In the end it was the vast gulf in class between the two scrum halves that separated the sides.

The Frenchman is the beating heart of his side. Youngs is the calming influence with record caps who has forgotten the importance of pace at the highest levels. England's selection changes did not prove Eddie Jones is either a genius or a busted flush but the reliance on his veteran scrum half is the chink that has to be ironed out if they are to start beating the best.

The verdict on Jones and his team yesterday? Clever but not quite fast enough.

Lawrence Dallaglio

Where's the method in the madness, Eddie? Many of your team calls have left me baffled



England's two best performances came in the last two games of the Six Nations. Progress then? Well it would be if they hadn't lost each time. Last night they were up against a talented France side playing to their potential. New Zealand came undone in Paris in November too so this defeat in itself is no cause for crisis.

What worries me, though, is that the gap in terms of ambition and execution of game plan was so vast. Sorry to sound like a broken record but we come back to the fact that France have made real advances since the 2019 World Cup, while England, well...

Seeing the line-ups for last night's game confirmed to me a trend I have sensed for a while now: England are turning into France and France are turning into England.

For much of the past two decades, England's selection has been largely coherent – conservative, some may argue – and based on picking players in the position in which they regularly play for their club. France, by contrast, have been inconsistent and often picked the right players in the wrong positions (Imanol Harinordquy at open-side, anyone?). It's why they had, until last night, won only one grand slam in 18 years.

Of late, the roles have been reversed. After the 2019 World Cup, the French put their faith in players under 30 and have largely backed them. In 2020, they lost to Scotland in round four of the Six Nations when a grand slam was there for the taking. Covid then intervened but when the Championship resumed seven months later, they picked the same starting line-up for the Ireland game, but for injuries to Damian Penaud and the retirement of Jefferson Poirat (which allowed Cyril Baille to come in, so that didn't work out too badly).

With England, the personnel turnover becomes less logical. Let's start with those playing out of position. We have had Tom Curry at No 8, about which I have written several times and, last night, we had Freddie Steward on the wing. It's not the first time the Leicester man has played there, but his preferred position is full back and he has done well there for England. You could understand Eddie Jones's reasons for putting him on the wing – as part of a plan to test France under the high ball with an effective kicking game.

The tactic was neither an outright success nor failure. By this stage in the tournament, however, you would have hoped that England would have had a bit more in their attacking locker. Marcus Smith was his usual enterprising self but you wonder if he has had to shoulder too much responsibility to spark a light.

Instead of Steward at 15 last night, we had George Furbank, who made his England debut in the same fixture two years ago. That was the match in which Jones forewarned the home

side to expect "absolute brutality". We saw precious little of that or of Furbank as France went 24-0 up after 55 minutes. Furbank has featured intermittently in squads since then, and has played well for Northampton in that period, but throwing him back in for a fixture of such magnitude?

I know injuries are commonplace now in international rugby and often militate against consistency in selection, but I have been left baffled by other calls during this campaign. Nick Isiekwe came back in because of Charlie Ewels's suspension and, I assume, injury to Joe Launchbury, but there has been scant recognition from Jones in the past that he views Isiekwe as a Test lock. In the back row, is it Sam Simmonds or Alex Dombrandt he wants at No 8 or will he go back to Curry again as soon as the Sale man is fit?

I've said before that successful sides need consistency and trust and each feeds off the other. Eleven of the France starting XV yesterday had been selected throughout the tournament. For England, the figure was five. I think you get the point.

Even before last night's result, how many England players would have made a combined Anglo-French XV?

I'm struggling to see the semblance of even half a World Cup-winning side

Ellis Genge, Jamie George, Courtney Lawes and Smith would all have been mentioned in the selection meeting, but Maro Itoje is the only name guaranteed on the teamsheet.

Who among the squad has made real progress over the past six weeks? Genge definitely, Steward possibly too; Itoje showed against Ireland his class, and Smith has confirmed his Test credentials. Apart from that... Twenty years ago, another England team lost in Paris. Eleven of the starting XV that day, however would be picked to start the World Cup final 20 months later – Matt Dawson and myself missing that defeat through injury, while Trevor Woodman and Josh Lewsey played their way in during the 12 months leading up to the 2003 tournament.

With this England group, I struggle to see the semblance of a World Cup-winning side. We are light years behind the 2023 World Cup hosts.

DON'T MISS THE RUCK

The latest edition of our podcast can be downloaded free of charge from iTunes from tomorrow afternoon

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PETER O'REILLY



Aviva Stadium, Dublin

One image that will linger is Johnny Sexton's crazed celebrations after Conor Murray crossed for Ireland's fourth try with the final play of the game. The bonus point was meaningless, while the result – and a triple crown – had been settled 20 minutes previously. Yet Ireland's skipper reacted as though something special had been achieved.

Maybe these opponents do it to him. Ireland and Scotland are pool partners again at next year's World Cup, so there was a psychological blow to be landed. There were probably personal grudges connected to selection for the British & Irish Lions. An element of needle permeated a game that was characterised by the number of errors on both sides.

After three mediocre performances from the Scots, it was no surprise that they turned up. They got into Sexton's eye-line, whacked him whenever they could, and scragged and stripped and poached like Scottish sides are supposed to do. Twin opensides Hamish Watson and Rory Darge slowed Ireland's ruck ball and gave Ireland's carriers no space.

Yet, look at Scotland's side of the scoresheet and all you see is one try by Pierre Schoeman, the loose-head prop, and a debated try at that.

The part that will haunt the losers is that they should have had another, one that might have changed the course of the contest. Amazingly, given his history of missed opportunities in this stadium, it was Scotland skipper Stuart Hogg who butchered this opportunity. Whereas Hogg's mistake here two years ago was a case of being too casual in possession, here it was just poor decision making at best, selfishness at worst.

This was in the 49th minute, when Ireland's lead was a mere nine points. When Chris Harris's grubber bounced kindly for Hogg on Ireland's 22, he was faced with the sort of two-on-one that professional players execute in their sleep. But instead of hitting Sam Johnson to his inside, Hogg backed his pace against Hugo Keenan on the outside. Bad, bad call.

For most of the contest, Ireland looked more likely winners but a scoreline of 14-12 might have caused them to doubt themselves. Already they must have been fuming at the number of opportunities they had left behind. But ultimately they always had more power and cutting edge close to the Scottish tryline. All four tries came from close range.

The Scots had no one to match the brilliant footwork and ability to make metres after contact that Dan Sheehan showed repeatedly. When you combine the carrying power of the forwards and the quick thinking and lightning feet of Jamison Gibson-Park, the result should have been sorted sooner. But not everyone in the Irish side was on Gibson-Park's wavelength, or at least not often



Sheehan scores the first of four Irish tries at the Aviva Stadium

Ireland's brute force tells as triple crown victory sealed

enough. Under pressure to perform, Scotland began brightly, finding holes in the middle with surprising ease – first Darcy Graham skipped through, then Ali Price. Schoeman spotted a gap at the side of a ruck and suddenly found himself in open prairie.

They could not cash in on these Irish lapses, though. Just as the Scots were enjoying time in their opponents' 22, George Turner and Jonny Gray failed to connect at a corner lineout or Turner would spill Price's pass.

Ireland, meanwhile, gave the impression of a side that could not wait to play ball. This was typified by Gibson-Park's 30-metre pass to Garry Ringrose behind the tryline – an unthinkable play for this team a few years back.

But while Ireland were game, they were not connecting the dots, turning the ball over seven times before the break.

Either James Lowe's pass to Tadhg Beirne was unsympathetic, or else the support could not get to Gibson-Park quickly enough after he had zipped through a gap. The scrum half ended up chipping but not cleverly

enough to upset Hogg, who did a great job of minding the shop.

The crucial settler for Ireland was Sexton's slide-rule 50-22 kick midway through the half. While they did not score from that corner lineout and while they continued to get in each other's way at times, their power told at the next attacking lineout, in the left corner.

When Sheehan eventually peeled away he looked a little isolated but he had the muscle to power through attempted tackles by Zander

WINS FOR CHIEFS, SAINTS AND WASPS

In the Premiership Rugby Cup, Exeter Chiefs produced a late turnaround against Worcester Warriors at Sandy Park to record a 31-29 bonus-point win. Wasps scored seven tries to beat Sale Sharks 41-26 at the AJ Bell and boost their slim chance of pool progression. Saracens were beaten 46-35 at home by Northampton Saints.

Fagerson and Blair Kinghorn. Sheehan was central to Ireland's second try, too, exploding from a standing start to knock the Scots on their heels and supplying the momentum that eventually led to Cian Healy's touchdown.

Schoeman's try, deriving from some successful Scottish counter-rucking in Ireland's 22, changed the tenor of the game. And it would have been altered again had Hogg done the simple thing. But he did not and Ireland had the result secure when Josh van der Flier capped a fine performance with a try in the 60th minute.

Star man Dan Sheehan (Ireland). **Scorers: Ireland: Tries** Sheehan (17min), Healey (28), Van der Flier (60), Murray (79). **Con** Sexton. **Scotland: Try** Schoeman (35). **Ireland** H Keenan (J Carberry 73); M Hansen, G Ringrose, B Aki (R Henshaw 55), J Lowe; J Sexton, J Gibson-Park (C Murray 66); C Healy (D Kilcoyne 51), D Sheehan (R Herring 62), T Furlong (F Bealham 67), T Beirne, I Henderson (K Treadwell 62), C Doris, J van der Flier, J Conan (P O'Mahony 51). **Scotland** S Hogg; D Graham, C Harris (F Russell 66), S Johnson (M Bennett 60), K Steyn; B Kinghorn, A Price (B White 60, sin-bin 78); P Schoeman (A Dell 73), G Turner (F Brown 51), Z Fagerson (WP Nel 54), J Gray, G Gilchrist (S Skinner 51), R Darge, H Watson, M Fagerson (J Bayliss 62). **Referee** Wayne Barnes (Eng). **Attendance** 51,700.

MATCH STATS

◆ Ireland ◆ Scotland		
4	Tries	1
51	Possession (%)	49
53	Territory (%)	47
80	Scrum success (%)	66
95	Lineout success (%)	92
3	Line breaks	5
5	Offloads	6
3	Breakdown steals	5
13	Turnovers won	13
10	Penalties conceded	15

Italy punish Wales to end losing run

WALES

21

ITALY

22

STEVE JAMES



A win at last for Italy, their first in the Six Nations since 2015 after 36 straight defeats, and their first ever in Cardiff. They had not beaten Wales since a victory in Rome in 2007.

Wales had appeared to have just done enough and were leading 21-15 in the 79th minute when Italy's full back, Ange Capuozzo, produced a moment of magic down the right and fed the wing Edoardo Padovani on the inside. He raced in near the posts. Paolo Garbisi converted and there was elation and celebration unconfined among the Italians. Many of the players slumped to the ground, almost in disbelief. There were tears, as well as hugs and smiles.

And in the end it was what Italy deserved, and what Wales deserved.

Wales were desperately disappointing, often losing the physical battle with the Italians, and their attacking game proved horribly lateral and as unconvincing as it often has been in this campaign.

Italy did to Wales just as Wales had done to France last weekend, kicking a lot and asking the opposition to make the running. And just like France, Wales became increasingly frustrated and ill-disciplined. The difference was that France managed to find their way through it; Wales could not, and this performance and indeed the selections made for it by their head coach, Wayne Pivac, could have long-term implications. Dan Biggar, the captain, was obviously emotional afterwards and hinted that for some players this could be the end.

When the result ends up like this, it is easy to conclude that Pivac had taken the opposition too lightly. He made seven changes and omitted key players such as Liam Williams, Ryan Elias, Will Rowlands, Alex Cuthbert and Tomas Francis, as well as, of course, rushing back Alun Wyn Jones. He ended up with Biggar at full back,



Padovani touches down and Italy are about to notch their first Six Nations win after 36 straight defeats

and Wales looked all at sea, even if they could point to a disallowed late try from replacement prop Wyn Jones that looked a marginal decision.

For all the questions around Wales, this was more about Italy's defiance and their spirited response to the constant debate about their presence in this competition. Their forwards were magnificent, with the lock Federico Ruzza, the flanker Giovanni Pettinelli and the No8, Toa Halafih, all outstanding, and in Capuozzo they have unearthed a potential superstar. That match-winning moment truly was brilliant, the way he went around Josh Adams and then stood up the replacement scrum half Kieran Hardy before feeding Padovani.

Adams was prematurely given the man-of-the-match award and he made a lovely gesture by giving it to Capuozzo after the game. He could have given it to Padovani as well, because he was superb throughout.

Wales's first attacking position after seven minutes had given a nasty harbinger of what was to come. The lineout in Italy's 22 after a penalty was overthrown, to collective groans

around the stadium. There were plenty more of those to come. Soon the Italy centre Juan Ignacio Brex was breaking the Welsh defence and a long-range penalty opportunity was afforded to Garbisi. He nailed it. Italy led 3-0. Another penalty was not long coming, and this time wing Padovani kicked it: 6-0.

Wales had to come good eventually and at last they strung together some phases – seven in all – and stretched the Italian defence with increasingly quick ball before Taulupe Faletau fed centre Owen Watkin through a gap. A lovely step finished the try. Biggar converted and Wales were in front.

Not for long. A second penalty from Garbisi made it 9-7. And then Padovani kicked his second penalty from a long way out. It was some strike. After 33 minutes Italy led 12-7. It could have been worse for Wales. The wing Monty Ioane sliced through stunningly in midfield after Johnny McNicholl's long kick, and Callum Braley, the scrum half, was just denied at the corner.

There was more as Italy were awarded the scrummage and Gar-

Wales were desperately disappointing, often losing the physical battle

bisi's cross-kick was reached first by McNicholl, who took some time to get to his feet after a heavy fall.

Italy still had a penalty advantage and went back across field for a line-out. But Wales somehow managed to repel the drive and escaped to the sanctuary of the changing rooms for some re-evaluation. Whatever was said clearly did not work immediately, because Italy very nearly scored first in the second half. Only a brilliant tackle from Josh Adams stopped Ioane, who had collected his own kick, at the left-hand corner.

Suddenly Wales's scrummage, with Brown on at tight-head, sprung into life, destroying the Italians. A penalty ensued and from the lineout after the kick to the corner, the hooker Lake

scored. Biggar converted via a post. Wales led 14-12, but Italy responded superbly as Ioane and Capuozzo managed to run from their own line and Adams was penalised in front of his posts. Garbisi kicked his third penalty penalty. Italy led 15-14.

Callum Sheedy arrived for Wales at fly half, as the lock Jones departed to a standing ovation. But there was little else for the home crowd to cheer about. Wales eventually scored, as initial good work from the replacements Wyn Jones and Moriarty allowed Adams to score. Biggar converted. But Italy had the final say.

Scorers: Wales: Tries Watkin (28min), Lake (51) Adams (69). **Con** Biggar 3. **Italy:** Try Padovani (79). **Con** Garbisi. **Pen** Garbisi 3 (13, 32, 57), Padovani 2 (16, 34). **Wales:** J McNicholl (C Sheedy 60min); L Rees-Zammit, O Watkin, W Halaholo (N Tompkins 47), J Adams; D Biggar, G Davies (K Hardy 67); G Thomas (W Jones 60), D Lake (B Roberts 76), D Lewis (L Brown 41), A Beard, AW Jones (W Rowlands 60), S Davies (R Moriarty 50), J Navidi, T Faletau. **Italy:** A Capuozzo; E Padovani, I Brex, L Marin (F Alongi 53), M Ioane; P Garbisi, C Braley (A Fusco 60); D Fischetti (C Traore 70), N Nicotera (L Bigi 53), P Ceccarelli (M Zanoni 53), M Fuser (N Cannone 48), F Ruzza, G Pettinelli (D Sisi 75), M Lamaro, T Halafih (B Steyn 64). **Referee** Andrew Brace (Ire). **Attendance** 74,500.

STEPHEN JONES'S SIX NATIONS REVIEW

MAN OF THE TOURNAMENT

Wales's Dan Biggar, now one of the great statesmen of the game. Up there with Barry John and Gareth Edwards.

BEST PLAYER

Jonathan Danty, left, triumphantly revived the role and the value of a powerhouse inside centre, in allowing the rest of the France team to play.

MOST IMPROVED PLAYER

Ellis Genge, the England prop, suddenly found

himself in the thick of things and making his presence felt. Ireland's Josh van der Flier and Matt Fagerson of Scotland, as well.

GREATEST PLEASURE

Interviewing the great Tadhg Furlong. Blimey, intelligent props. Whatever next?

GHOSTLY PRESENCE

Manu Tuilagi haunted every move that England made, but sadly not on the field.

NONSENSICAL OFFICIATING

Any time there was a scrum,

but especially in the England v Ireland match, when a wheel was no longer a wheel.

BEST SIDESHOW

The heroic qualification for the World Cup next year by the deserving and passionate Spain, a nation where the game is growing rapidly.

SO FAREWELL THEN

Brian Moore, inset, ended his stint in the men's Six Nations

commentary seat for the BBC. He had to go. I fear the great man suddenly realised that he had become a national treasure.

GREAT ESCAPE

The end of the Covid ban on crowds brought a glorious reminder of the appeal of the Six Nations.

LOUDEST NOISE

One doyen of Twickenham claimed that he had never heard a more animated crowd



than that which cheered on England (albeit in vain) against Ireland.

BIGGEST MYSTERY

Eddie Jones taking Marcus Smith off after 63 minutes at Murrayfield when England were leading 17-10, Smith having scored all their points.

UNSTEADY INFLUENCE

The Australian media adviser who, it is said by Jones, helps him with his pre-match chats and stances, and therefore causes him way more grief than advantage.

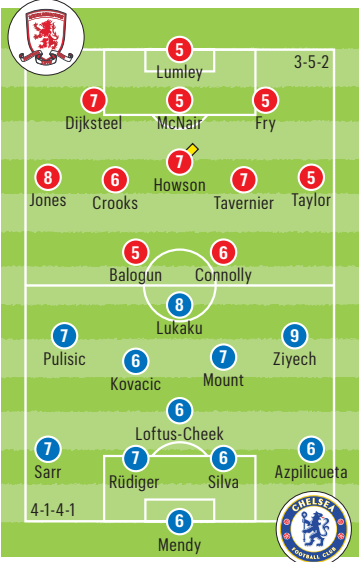


Chelsea shut out the noise to ease into semi-finals

MIDDLESBROUGH	0
CHelsea	2
Lukaku 15, Ziyech 31	

Ian Whittell

The court of public opinion has had its say on Chelsea and their outgoing owner Roman Abramovich but Thomas Tuchel's response to the crisis engulfing his club continues to impress. His team strode into the FA Cup semi-finals with minimal fuss, and one of the Sky Bet Championship's form teams had little answer. This was a dominant performance from Tuchel's side, who made five changes from the midweek Champions League success in Lille. First-half goals from Romelu Lukaku and Hakim Ziyech kept Chelsea on course for what would be a fifth FA Cup final in the past six seasons. It is safe to say that Chelsea have made Wembley a second home during the Abramovich years. They have won the FA Cup five times, although during the last of those victories, over Manchester United in 2018, their owner was absent due to "visa problems", a portent of things to come.



Star man Hakim Ziyech (Chelsea). **Substitutes:** Middlesbrough S Bamba (for Fry 45min, 6), L Peltier (for McNair 53, 6), M Bola (for Taylor 58, 5), D Watmore (for Connolly 58, 5), J Coburn (for Balogun 74). **Chelsea** T Werner (for Pulisic 68, 7), N Kanté (for Kovacic 69, 7), Kenedy (for Ziyech 81), H Vale (for Lukaku 84). **Referee** P Tierney. **Attendance** 31,422.

SEMI-FINAL DRAW

The draw for the last four will be made before the Nottingham Forest v Liverpool tie this evening by former Reds striker Robbie Fowler


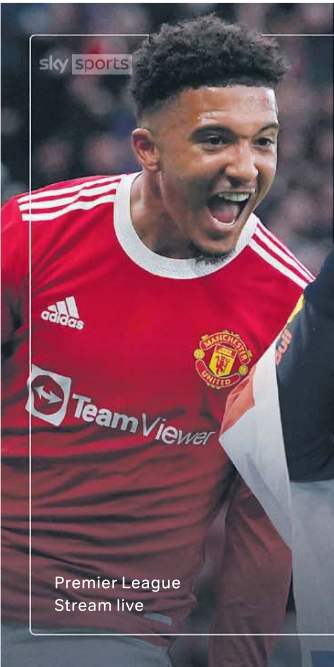


Lukaku scores for the fifth time in cup competitions since his most recent league goal

Since the UK government imposed sanctions on the Russian oligarch and, therefore, his club ten days ago, Tuchel has now masterminded four victories in three different competitions. Chelsea may, understandably, have lost the support of the neutral fan in recent days but Tuchel most certainly has not. If the checklist for avoiding FA Cup upsets included an early goal to quieten the hostile home crowd, then Tuchel will have been delighted, and more than a little relieved, that it took only 15 minutes for the opener to arrive. Lukaku was the scorer, although he might have been even earlier with his

contribution after missing from Mason Mount's right-wing delivery with only three minutes played. The Belgian competed with the defender Dael Fry, who opted not to touch the cross for fear of turning it into his own goal, but Lukaku also missed contact, as did Christian Pulisic as he arrived late at the far post. There was no such reprieve for the Championship side after a quarter of an hour as Ziyech started, then continued, a move in his own half before releasing Mount down the right again. It was a carbon copy of the earlier cross, only this time Lukaku timed his run to perfection, easing ahead of Anfernee Dijksteel, and converting

from near point-blank range, a finish that was far more dexterous and difficult than he made it appear. For a No9 without a league goal since the end of 2021, it was a welcome reminder that he can still play some sort of role in Chelsea's future, whatever that may look like. Since his most recent league goal, Lukaku has scored five times – three in the FA Cup and two in the Club World Cup – to remain relevant in, if not exactly essential to, Tuchel's plans. But as befits the conquerors already of Manchester United and Tottenham Hotspur in this season's competition, Chris Wilder's side were far from cowed by conceding first.



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OLI SCARFF/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

JAMES AND RAMSDALE OUT OF ENGLAND DUTY

Reece James will be pulled out of the England squad after missing Chelsea's FA Cup win at Middlesbrough — leaving Gareth Southgate with a major headache in that position. The right back, who only returned to Chelsea after a long-term injury lay-off in a win at Burnley at the start of the month, is back in the treatment room at Stamford Bridge.

And that has prompted manager Thomas Tuchel to instruct technical and sporting director Petr Cech to notify Southgate of his absence.

Liverpool's Trent Alexander-Arnold has also already pulled out of Southgate's initial 25-man squad for the friendlies with Switzerland and Ivory Coast at the end of the month.

Southgate opted not to select Manchester City's Kyle Walker — although he has vowed to recall him for games in June — which leaves Manchester United left back Luke Shaw as the only full back in his squad.

Aaron Ramsdale, the Arsenal goalkeeper, will also be absent after suffering a hip injury, which caused him to miss the club's 1-0 win away to Aston Villa yesterday.

Chelsea may have lost the support of the neutral fan in recent days but Tuchel has not

Marcus Tavernier's dangerous free kick forced a fine defensive header by Lukaku on 25 minutes and, from the resulting corner, Folarin Balogun missed a chance with a bizarre header that somehow travelled away from goal, rather than towards it.

Middlesbrough's recovery was short-lived. Just after the half-hour, Édouard Mendy started an attack with a pass from his own penalty area to Antonio Rüdiger which, three passes later, ended with the ball being deposited in the back of the Middlesbrough goal. Mateo Kovacic took the ball over

halfway before finding Mount, whose pass to Ziyech on the right allowed him space to attack his defender, cut inside and deposit a curling shot past the diving Joe Lumley. The goalkeeper may have misjudged his angles but the lethal finish was a sight to behold.

The tie looked over, and should have been five minutes later, when Chelsea scythed through the home defence again, Tavernier inadvertently touched the ball into the path of Lukaku and, after he had rounded the goalkeeper, only Dijksteel's goalline clearance averted further calamity.

It was hard to imagine proceedings going any more swimmingly for Tuchel. Even when Pulisic collapsed, with nobody around him, having apparently twisted his ankle awkwardly late in the first half, he was soon able to continue.

Wilder's response, meanwhile, was to bring on the experienced centre half Sol Bamba at the interval, in an attempt to counter the impact of Lukaku, and two early excellent pieces of defending on the Belgian augured well for the home side.

Less encouraging was that another of Wilder's back four, Paddy McNair, went off injured only eight minutes after the restart, forcing Middlesbrough into another defensive shuffle.

Instead, all too often, it was Chelsea who were able to play pretty patterns through the opposition defence. Mount and Ziyech combined on 55 minutes before the former's shot was deflected behind for a corner.

Middlesbrough, roared on by their noisy fans despite the scoreline, continued to battle valiantly, although Chelsea never offered them much hope of repeating the drama they have enjoyed in previous rounds.

The substitute Duncan Watmore chipped a shot over and Isaiah Jones had a dangerous cross well handled by Mendy but Chelsea were rarely troubled as they ran down the clock.

Rod Liddle

Chelsea are sinking to new depths in wake of Abramovich sanctions – playing the victim is ridiculous



Their oligarch owner is the sole cause of Chelsea's success, the only reason they are now a 'big club'

Incredible, no? Middlesbrough reacted with open-mouthed incredulity, suggesting that it was “ironic” that Buck should use the term “integrity”, given the nature of the club's Russian ownership. Quite. As it happens, Steve Gibson, the Middlesbrough chairman, had rather kindly extended the deadline for Chelsea fans to buy away tickets in the hope or expectation that the ownership question might have been resolved in time. But Buck's statement put an end to that. “We're not going to help them any more,” Gibson said. Chelsea's mindset seems to be that they are innocent victims, and that while Abramovich may indeed have been a bad 'un, that had nothing to do with the club.

That is a ridiculous notion. Abramovich is the sole cause of Chelsea's success over the past 19 years, the only reason they are now considered a “big club”. Without Abramovich — and his retrospectively acknowledged ill-gotten gains — they would still be a middling-to-lower Premier League side who occasionally won the FA Cup.

The present team were acquired by Abramovich. He paid their salaries and the enormous transfer fees needed to bring them to Stamford Bridge. Chelsea's achievements have been the consequence of dirty money acquired in dubious circumstances by a man with proven ties to a tyrannical and increasingly fascistic dictator who has just launched a war against a sovereign European country. There are no caveats. That Abramovich

should have been called out and debarred before is scarcely a plea of mitigation. Similarly, to point out that there are several other club owners at large whose wealth is perhaps equally tainted does nothing to excuse Abramovich (nor indeed Chelsea). These are non-sequiturs from a club who, hilariously, feel they have been victimised and that we should all have vast reservoirs of sympathy for them. Nope, there's none here, Mr Buck. Not a scintilla.

Meanwhile, Chelsea fans were doing their bit to besmirch still further the brand by fighting in the streets with the police after the club's Champions League victory in Lille, and screaming the name of Abramovich, who they believe was unfairly singled out for government stricture. This is a remarkably imbecilic case of misplaced loyalty. Their two goals scored in France came from Christian Pulisic and the incomparable César Azpilicueta, who cost a total of £65 million — money unethically and possibly illegally acquired. The victimhood thing doesn't wash. Chelsea — unlike Bury, and possibly Derby County — are not going to go out of business.

But who will buy them? Possibly Nick Candy, a billionaire property developer who has made his money by creating hideous London palaces largely for Arab and, er, Russian “businessmen”. Sadly, the Premier League's “fit and proper” owners' test does not disbar people from running football clubs simply because they have a penchant for interior design that resembles the kind of thing favoured by a dictator in one of the 'stans. Or there is the Ricketts family — nothing to do with the former Bolton Wanderers forward Michael, but American moneybags who own the Chicago Cubs baseball team.

Lord Coe, the president of World Athletics, is also involved. Where the hell did he get his money from? A mystery, innit?

TERRY JOINS CONSORTIUM BIDDING FOR STAKE IN CHELSEA

The former Chelsea captain John Terry has joined the True Blues Consortium that is aiming to gain a 10 per cent ownership stake in the club.

The consortium wants to levy funds to buy a stake in Chelsea through a community offering. It plans to work with the club's new owners to allow fans the chance to buy into the set-up from as little as £100. The consortium has made contact with The Raine Group, the bank brought in by Roman Abramovich to oversee Chelsea's sale.

Chelsea Pitch Owners, which owns the Stamford Bridge freehold, and the Chelsea

Supporters' Trust have backed the plan in principle. The True Blues Consortium would elect one representative to sit on Chelsea's board. “I want to see the club's history and heritage protected as we go into a new era with like-minded people, who have the same vision of building the best club in the world. I know they understand,” Terry said in a statement.

There have so far been five confirmed bidders for Chelsea Football Club. They are: ● Nick Candy, Hana Financial Investment Company and C&P Sports. The South Korean companies have joined forces with the property developer Candy.

● The London-based financial firm Aethel Partners have said it had put in a bid of more than £2 billion. ● Martin Broughton, the former Liverpool and British Airways chairman, and Lord Coe, the World Athletics president. Broughton said their bid was for between £2 billion and £3 billion. ● The Ricketts family, owners of US baseball team Chicago Cubs, and Ken Griffin, founder of the hedge fund Citadel. ● The Swiss billionaire Hansjorg Wyss, 86, who has linked up with the LA Dodgers co-owner Todd Boehly, the British businessman Jonathan Goldstein and the Conservative peer Lord Finkelstein.



About 600 Chelsea fans made the trip to Middlesbrough, with away ticket sales limited

Saka shines bright as Arsenal revive the good old days

ASTON VILLA	0
ARSENAL	1
Saka 30	

Paul Rowan

George Graham's Arsenal sides were famous for scoring early away from home and then successfully shutting up shop, and while it would be overly simplistic to categorise this victory as a return to those good old days, there was a doggedness in victory that has been absent in Arsenal sides of a more recent vintage.

Bukayo Saka scored the only goal of the game on the half-hour mark and while Arsenal dominated for the first hour, Villa gave them a good test in the last third of the game, which they managed to withstand when previously they might have crumbled. There were no chants of "one-nil to the Arsenal" or the one about being boring – for the game and their football was anything but – just jubilation from the thousands of away fans that Mikel Arteta's side are now four points ahead of the chasing pack for fourth place.

Those fans had played an important role in bolstering tired legs and minds in the Arsenal team, playing their third game in six days. Afterwards, Mikel Arteta stood by his criticism of Arsenal's fixture list. "We showed a lot of personality to play the way we played," Arteta said. "We dominated the game. I can complain about whether it is fair or not, but I told you that we would be ready."



Star man Thomas Partey (Arsenal)
Substitutes: Aston Villa B Traoré (for Buendia 63min, 5), L Bailey (for Ramsey 63, 7), D Ings (for Watkins 82).
Arsenal N Pépé (for Saka 69, 6), E Nketiah (for Lacazette 77), R Holding (for Odegaard 86).
Referee A Madley. **Attendance** 41,956.

Arsenal are the third side to score 2,000 goals in the Premier League

Manchester United	2,176
Liverpool	2,002
Arsenal	2,000
Chelsea	1,954
Tottenham Hotspur	1,720

Saka celebrates the only goal of the game at Villa Park yesterday before heading off for England duty despite suffering from the effects of a hip problem

Saka made a huge contribution for most of the hour that he was on and when he came off was, in Arteta's words, "really fatigued". He also has a hip issue, but Arteta says he should be able to join the England squad this week. Aaron Ramsdale is, however, out of the England squad, with a stomach muscle problem that he picked up in the midweek defeat by Liverpool and consigned him to the role of onlooker at Villa Park. His replacement, Bernd Leno, was also a spectator for the first half in which Villa failed to register an effort on target. Villa looked weakened by the loss of Lucas Digne, with 36-year-old Ashley Young stepping in as left back against Saka. Young used to be a flying winger himself but after only four minutes, Saka burned off Young down the right and pulled the ball back for

Emile Smith Rowe who blasted over the bar. Emiliano Martínez had to be on his toes to beat away a nasty deflection off Ezri Konsa from an Arsenal cross while Smith Rowe then had a second chance, which he also spurned after intricate work down the right from Saka and Martin Odegaard in front of the cooing Arsenal away support. The fans were then on their feet in outrage when Young pulled down Saka. From the subsequent free kick, Cedric Soares set off down the right and while his cross didn't look particularly dangerous, the clearance landed at the feet of Saka, who had moved off the wing to take up a good position on the edge of the D. Saka's low shot went through several bodies and appeared to catch Martínez off guard, for the goalkeeper's footwork

was wanting as he failed to get down to stop the ball flashing by him. Villa didn't know how to deal with Saka, and Tyrone Mings was booked minutes later when he caught him as he slid in with a challenge, having initially won the ball. That sparked a bout of pushing and shoving between the two sides, with Granit Xhaka inevitably in the middle of it and the Arsenal midfielder was then booked shortly after for pulling back Philippe Coutinho. Perhaps Thomas Partey will bring the quality of calmness to the team in due course for he controlled just about everything else during the course of the first half. Villa, however, started to come into the game properly for the first time by going more direct. Ollie Watkins did well to hold up a long ball and bring John McGinn into play, but his shot

Parker hails 'superb' display



Solanke added a third with his 24th goal of the season

SKY BET CHAMPIONSHIP

HUDDERSFIELD	0
BOURNEMOUTH	3
Anthony 19, Lerma 31, Solanke 46	

Adam Lanigan

Bournemouth took a big step towards the Premier League as they shrugged off the challenge of third-placed Huddersfield Town. Points on the board or games in hand is often the question fans and managers ponder at this stage of the season, but Bournemouth have both. Victory in West Yorkshire stretched their advantage to six points, having

played three games fewer than their opponents, and two fewer than Luton Town, who jumped into third on goal difference. Everything is in favour of Scott Parker's side, although they do have a challenging run-in, including games against eight of the top 12. "Huddersfield are a very good side and Carlos [Corberán, their manager] has done an unbelievable job, but we were too good for them today," Parker said. "We got an all-round performance. We were superb from start to finish, it was one of the best of the season in every facet. That was a statement to ourselves. I know if we perform every game like we did today, we'll be fine." On a lovely spring day, with ice-cream vans doing a brisk trade, the weather helped to throw off the shackles. Dominic Solanke had a good effort well saved by Lee Nicholls and hit the bar with a header, while

Jon Russell's header was clawed away by Mark Travers at the other end – all in the first ten minutes. However, the breakthrough was not long in coming as Solanke could have shot but unselfishly squared it for Jaidon Anthony to sweep home. From there Bournemouth took command, and it did not take long for their lead to double. Solanke was denied by Nicholls after a one-two with Jefferson Lerma, but when Tom Lees failed to clear the ball, the Colombian got enough pace on his shot to send it beyond the backpedalling goalkeeper for his first goal in 351 days. And Solanke, in a commanding display, put the game to bed straight after half-time, back-healing in his 24th of the season from Philip Billing's low ball across the six-yard box. They could have had more goals, but they had made their point. As for Huddersfield, it was a second

defeat in three days, having gone all winter without one. Beginning the day hoping to be level on points for an automatic spot, they ended it looking over their shoulders, with concerns about maintaining their play-off place. "After the first goal, the difference between the two sides just grew," Corberán said. "The team had to make a lot of effort and sacrifices to get those results [in their unbeaten run]. Now we have to find a way of how we can be competitive in this exciting period of games we have."

Star man Dominic Solanke (Bournemouth).
Huddersfield (4-4-2): L Nicholls 7 — O Turton 6, M Pearson 6, T Lees 5 (L Colwill 46min, 5), H Toffolo 6 — S Thomas 6, J Russell 6, L O'Brien 6, D Holmes 5 (T Anjorin 70, 4) — D Sinani 5 (J Koroma 53, 5) D Ward 6.
Bournemouth (4-3-2-1): M Travers 6 — A Smith 7, N Phillips 6, L Kelly 6, J Zemura 7 — J Lerma 7 (J Lowe 83), S Cook 7, P Billing 7 (T Cantwell 80) — R Christie 6, J Anthony 7 — D Solanke 8 (S Dembele 88). **Booked** Travers, Christie, Lerma.
Referee S Hooper. **Attendance** 20,336.

CHRIS BRUNSKILL/FANTASISTA/GETTY IMAGES



went narrowly wide. Then, Douglas Luiz wasted a free kick after Partey pulled down Matty Cash.

Arsenal still enjoyed plenty of possession but their zip had gone, Young, a genuine attacking threat in the second half, found substitute Danny Ings, but the forward headed just over.

Saka complained afterwards about not getting enough protection from referees, while Steven Gerrard, the Villa manager, had a moan of his own. “We didn’t deserve anything from that game because of our first-half performance when we showed them too much respect,” said Gerrard, who was questioned about the mentality of his side against the team’s above them. “Maybe it is a bit upstairs for a few,” Gerrard admitted. Arsenal, on the other hand, have their game heads firmly screwed on.

THE GAFFER TAPES
WHAT THE
MANAGERS SAID

STEVEN GERRARD

We didn’t deserve anything after that first-half performance. We were second best. I thought Arsenal played really well, controlled a lot of the first half. We had too much respect for Arsenal. We lacked belief in ourselves collectively. No complaints in terms of the overall scoreline.



MIKEL ARTETA

It was a big win. After the defeat against Liverpool we wanted to come here and play well first, which we did, and get the three points, because we want to keep the momentum going. I think the team showed a lot of personality to come and play the way we played. We dominated the game.



PREMIER LEAGUE

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Man City	29	22	4	3	68	18	70
Liverpool	29	21	6	2	75	20	69
Chelsea	28	17	8	3	57	19	59
Arsenal	28	17	3	8	44	31	54
Man Utd	29	14	8	7	48	40	50
West Ham	29	14	6	9	48	36	48
Tottenham	28	15	3	10	44	35	48
Wolverhampton	30	14	4	12	31	26	46
Aston Villa	29	11	3	15	41	40	36
Southampton	29	8	11	10	36	45	35
Crystal Palace	29	7	13	9	39	38	34
Leicester	26	9	6	11	40	45	33
Brighton	29	7	12	10	26	36	33
Newcastle	29	7	10	12	32	49	31
Brentford	29	8	6	15	32	45	30
Leeds	30	7	8	15	34	67	29
Everton	27	7	4	16	29	47	25
Watford	29	6	4	19	29	55	22
Burnley	27	3	12	12	22	38	21
Norwich	29	4	5	20	18	63	17

Alyson Rudd

Don’t listen to Klopp, just look at his side.
City’s one-point lead is far more fragile
than Liverpool’s winning momentum



What is it with football managers? They don’t like games in hand, and they don’t seem to take much succour from momentum either. And yet this past week was one which, if you believe in the power of momentum, showed us that Liverpool have an excellent chance of winning the Premier League title.

Two days after Manchester City were held at Selhurst Park, Jürgen Klopp’s team were also in the capital, busy defeating a sprightly Arsenal. It was Liverpool’s ninth league win in a row. What had been a 14-point gap two months ago has now been cut to a single point. Yes, Klopp’s side had played two fewer games when the gap was that big, but games in hand mean nothing, after all.

We have returned to in-person post-match press conferences, so it was intriguing to witness Pep Guardiola and Klopp in the flesh, handling the hype as the title race begins bubbling. One was prosaically philosophical, the other poetically so. “Luck doesn’t exist in football,” Guardiola said, his expression one of bored irony. “We have to score goals and we didn’t do it.”

Klopp, meanwhile, in spite of being introduced as available for only a short while due to the late kick-off, offered a lengthy mix of funny, incredulous, passionate and realistic assessments, the most surprising of which was his revelation that possessing momentum is not the least bit enjoyable. “Momentum is the most fragile flower on the planet,” the German said. “Someone steps on it and then it’s gone. I’m not a big friend of momentum. Just find a way to get through it.”

Momentum is a wonderful thing to have and a terrible thing to lose. But then so is love – better to have had momentum and then lost it than never to have had momentum at all. I expect Klopp is alluding to how

damaging it can be to have a long successful stretch broken. In January last year Burnley interrupted Liverpool’s remarkable 68-match unbeaten run at Anfield and suddenly the team were a relative mess, losing at home to Brighton & Hove Albion, then City, then Everton, then Chelsea, then Fulham.

Liverpool cannot afford a blip to cause such mayhem again, but as the only way they are going to wrest the title from City is to maintain momentum, it hardly matters. One defeat or one draw may be all it takes to kill their title challenge, even if they bounce right back afterwards.

Even though City hold that point advantage they appear far from superior. The psychology of being hunted down is a curious one. Andrew Robertson, the Liverpool full

back, said after the 2-0 win over Arsenal that he would rather be in City’s shoes, and that is the logical response, but there is something of the drooling wolf about the Merseyside club right now. Perhaps the most impressive element of that victory was how they exuded a sense of containment. No player, no coach will ever admit to taking it anything other than one game at a time, yet this was Liverpool contesting the entire run-in, not only the challenge posed by Mikel Arteta’s team. It was so important to seize the moment, to apply pressure in the days after City were held, while at the same time looking capable of improvement.

Momentum is not a maidenhair fern nor a delicate orchid, but a giant boulder thundering towards obstacles in its path. It is the response to the end of a long winning streak, the disintegration of the boulder, that offers any fragility.

Guardiola admitted that he would be watching Liverpool against Arsenal and he would have seen a team dissimilar to what his players offered in south London. Klopp made changes, he did not. His team’s pattern and flow were consistent, while Klopp’s side ebbed and flowed. At the final whistle, City were muddled, flustered and frustrated, while Liverpool, in spite of the challenge posed by a confident Arsenal, were largely unruffled.

In 2019 a single point separated City and Liverpool before the final day, but suspense was low. Few expected Guardiola’s side to slip up. Should the same gap remain this time it could be more unpredictable, given Steven Gerrard would very much like his Aston Villa side to cause an upset at the Etihad come May 22, which could hand the title to his old club.

City hold the advantage, yes, but Liverpool perform as though it is theirs.

City have the extra point but there is something of the drooling wolf about Liverpool right now

LEAGUE TITLE RUN-IN

Man City Apr 2 Burnley (a), Apr 10 Liverpool (h), Apr 17 Wolves (a), Apr 20 Brighton (h), Apr 23 Watford (h), Apr 30 Leeds (a), May 7 Newcastle (h), May 15 West Ham (a), May 22 Villa (h). **Liverpool** Apr 2 Watford (h), Apr 10 Man City (a), Apr 16 Villa (a), Apr 19 Man Utd (h), Apr 24 Everton (h), Apr 30 Newcastle (a), May 7 Spurs (h), May 15 Southampton (a), May 22 Wolves (h).

Adebayo strikes to give Luton advantage in play-off race

ROUND-UP

Luton Town were probably not many, or even any, people’s tips to win promotion this season, but their campaign continues to astound (Peter Wilson writes). Nathan Jones’s side won 3-1 away to Hull City to rise to third place.

A 12th win in 18 league games lifted Luton above Blackburn Rovers and Huddersfield Town. They may have left it too late for automatic promotion, but a play-off place is theirs to lose.

The impressive Elijah Adebayo, inset, fired them in front after nine minutes. Harry Cornick added a second after the break, with James

Bree making it three from a 25-yard free kick which went in off the crossbar. Tom Eaves scored a stoppage-time reply for the home side.

Blackburn, meanwhile, appear to be going in the opposite direction. After looking like automatic promotion candidates at the turn of the year, two wins in 11 games has put their play-off hopes in doubt. They lost 1-0 away to Reading, a seventh away game without a goal. Josh Laurent struck to give the interim manager, Paul Ince, victory against his former club.

Second-half goals from Sander Berge and Morgan Gibbs-White

helped Sheffield United to puncture Barnsley’s revival with a 2-0 win that lifted them to fifth.

Despite a four-match run without defeat the play-offs may already have gone for West Bromwich Albion, who twice came from behind to draw 2-2 away to Bristol City. Nahki Wells, an early substitute, gave the hosts a 29th-minute lead. Karlan Grant equalised from the spot on 68 minutes before a late flurry. Andreas Weimann volleyed City in front with five minutes remaining but Adam Reach, the substitute, equalised in stoppage time against a side who concede too many late goals.



SKY BET CHAMPIONSHIP

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Fulham	37	23	8	6	90	32	77
Bournemouth	36	20	9	7	59	31	69
Luton	38	18	9	11	56	42	63
Huddersfield	39	17	12	10	51	43	63
Sheffield Utd	38	17	10	11	52	40	61
Blackburn	39	17	10	12	49	39	61
QPR	37	17	8	12	53	45	59
Middlesbrough	37	17	8	12	48	40	59
Nottm Forest	36	16	10	10	53	35	58
Millwall	38	15	12	11	39	36	57
Coventry	38	15	10	13	49	46	55
West Bromwich	38	14	12	12	42	36	54
Blackpool	37	14	10	13	42	41	52
Preston	38	12	15	11	40	44	51
Stoke	38	13	10	15	48	44	49
Swansea	37	13	9	15	41	52	48
Cardiff	38	13	7	18	45	56	46
Bristol City	39	12	8	19	49	69	44
Birmingham	39	10	12	17	42	58	42
Hull	39	11	8	20	33	44	41
Reading	38	11	6	21	44	73	33
Barnsley	38	6	10	22	28	54	28
Derby	39	11	13	15	38	45	25
Peterborough	37	5	8	24	29	75	23

* deducted 21pts for breaching financial rules and for going into administration
† deducted 6pts for breaching financial rules

Football

Jonathan Northcroft

As if relegation scrap wasn't bad enough, Everton are beset by links to oligarch Usmanov and runaway financial losses



For a raucous, rumbustious 20 minutes or so, Everton were transported back to better days. To the David Moyes days, the Joe Royle “Dogs of War” days; to those time-honoured days at Goodison Park where, when their backs were against the wall, the grand old team bloodied noses.

The revivalism broke out in the closing stages of Thursday's priceless win over Newcastle United. Down to ten men, Frank Lampard's side appeared cornered. But an old energy, the energy of indignation, coursed through Goodison Park and on to the players on the pitch.

The faded stadium is one of football's magnificent bear pits when the blood is up like that, and Newcastle, having played the better, took a backward step. Alex Iwobi surged through to score a winning goal of quality and in the mayhem, a cavorting Lampard broke his hand.

That Everton, grand old Everton, is what draws sensible men, like the club's latest manager, to come to L4 and put themselves on the line in a job that has eaten up so many. They come not rationally but in optimism – because he who can harness the club's still unique chemistry has a force on his hands, broken or otherwise. It is Lampard's belief that Thursday was the turning point he has been looking for.

Those Goodison supporters, who faithfully keep fulfilling their side of the bargain, deserve it to be, and Jamie Carragher has spoken impassionedly on Sky Sports' *Monday Night Football* about the change from players required. The players need the intensity of that finale against Newcastle to become their standard mode. They will need it today because it takes a good side, right on their game, to get the better of Patrick Vieira's Crystal Palace.

But the fresh start must extend past the pitch, to the boardroom. Should Lampard steer Everton to Premier League survival and away from the financial apocalypse relegation would bring, there will be an onus on Farhad Moshiri, the club's owner, to change as well. When the UK government plays its role in assessing the preferred bidder to become Chelsea's next owner, it is understood that Treasury officials will look not so much at funding but whether any takeover proposal is ethical or sustainable. It has to be questioned whether Moshiri's Everton stewardship, which began in March 2016, would pass such a test.

Sustainable? When Everton's latest accounts, covering the 2020-21 season, are released before March 31, they are expected to reveal significant losses for a third successive year. Everton lost £140 million in 2018-19 and £112 million in 2019-20 – losses that were both in the top seven recorded by an English club at any time in history, and which totalled more than the combined net losses of the nearest two Premier League clubs in the same period, those of Southampton (£117 million) and Manchester City (£115 million).

Indeed, Everton have posted losses in all but one of Moshiri's six years of ownership, spending £668 million on transfers, north of £40 million in paying off sacked managers and eye-watering sums on remunerating

players and agents. Everton's wage bill has doubled and their wages to turnover ratio leapt to 89 per cent.

According to the football finance blogger Swiss Ramble, by last season Moshiri had probably injected £450 million into Everton, by far the highest owner funding in the league, and double what Roman Abramovich put into Chelsea during a similar period. Swiss Ramble is among several financial experts who suspect Everton are close to breaching the Premier League's profit and sustainability rules, risking – among other punishments – a transfer ban.

However, Everton are confident of being able to show the Premier League that they have operated within profit and sustainability limits, because the club suffered high Covid-related losses (which are permissible) and, with work under way on a new ground at Bramley-Moore Dock, have significant stadium costs to offset.

An ownership's ethical profile is thornier to judge. But, if football has learnt anything from Abramovich, it should be to look hard at an owner's past and the company they keep. From 1993, until moving swiftly to sever ties at the start of this month, Moshiri worked for or with Alisher Usmanov who, like Abramovich, has been sanctioned by the UK government after Russia's invasion of

Lampard believes that Thursday's win over Newcastle was the turning point

EXTRA TIME

with **Jonny Owen**

The duel that started one of the forgotten rivalries of English football



There is a song that's sung by the Kop at most Liverpool home games. It's one of football's most famous and dates back to the late 1970s. It starts with the line “We hate Nottingham Forest” and then lists Liverpool's other great rivals,

Everton and Manchester United.

There is also an answering chant that used to come from the Trent End at the City Ground: “And Nottingham Forest hate you!”

For most people under the age of 35 you would understand the last two teams mentioned by Liverpool fans, but Forest? Really? They haven't even played one another in more than 20 years, a lifetime in footballing terms, yet when I speak to Liverpool-supporting friends of a certain generation they would tell me how desperate they were during every FA Cup draw to pull Forest out of the hat.

ILLUSTRATION BY RICHARD WALKER



Forest and Liverpool met in some of the era's most-watched games, leaving an imprint on a whole generation of fans

Here's the reason why. In 1975 there would have been no indication that the two teams who would dominate European football for the rest of the decade would be English, barely a two-hour drive across the country from one another. Historical giants such as Ajax and Bayern Munich had pretty much owned the trophy known as “big ears”, but Liverpool were starting to establish their credentials as a European power, winning the Uefa Cup in 1973 and the domestic title in 1977 to qualify for the European Cup, with real ambitions to win it.

With a team packed full of world-class players who had won their domestic league in four of the previous five years, they finally achieved their holy grail in May 1977 when Bob Paisley landed the trophy that had eluded even the great Bill Shankly. That night Liverpool set a precedent that would lead to English teams dominating the competition in a way not seen since.

Meanwhile, on the banks of the Trent they had just appointed the

mercurial but temperamental Brian Clough. His glory years at Derby County suddenly seemed light years away after a disastrous 44 days at Leeds United and an ill thought-out stint at Brighton & Hove Albion.

No one had any idea how it would work out for Clough. But while others talked about it being the last chance for the Boro boy, Clough, in typically bullish form, told his new team – languishing in the Second Division – that their new rivals weren't Notts County, a few hundred yards over the river and above them in the league, or even Derby (recently crowned English champions), but Liverpool!



Ukraine. Usmanov is also sanctioned by the United States, Switzerland and the European Union, which, when freezing his assets, described Usmanov as “one of Vladimir Putin’s favourite oligarchs” who “reportedly fronted for President Putin and solved his business problems”.

Usmanov, 68, once said, “I am proud that I know Putin, and the fact that everybody does not like him is not Putin’s problem,” making an odious historical comparison – “I don’t think the world loved Truman after Nagasaki.” In 2007 he paid £35 million for an art collection and gifted it to Russia’s president.

Moshiri, 66, met Usmanov in 1989, when an accountant for Deloitte & Touche in London. In 1993 he began working for Usmanov, helping to manage his investments in metals, mining, telecoms and, later, tech. “We became friends almost at once,” Usmanov said, describing Moshiri as his “financial mentor”.

Businesses in which they were codirectors included Europe Steel, where other directors were Rem Vyakhirev, the billionaire former chairman of Gazprom, and Mikhail Komissar, who runs the Russian news agency Interfax. For his acumen, Usmanov rewarded Moshiri with shareholdings in several companies, allowing Moshiri, who has an estimated net worth of £2 billion, to begin building wealth in his own right.

When Usmanov – who before sanctions was estimated to be worth £13.4 billion – rolled his investments into a parent company, USM Holdings, the other main shareholders were Moshiri, Ivan Streshinsky and Vladimir Skoch. Skoch’s son, Andrei, is a deputy in the Russian Duma (parliament) for Putin’s United Russia party, and is also sanctioned by the US.

A biography provided by Usmanov’s former PR advisers when he was seeking re-election as president of the International Fencing Federation in 2012 boasted of his role in securing Russia the 2018 World Cup. It also stated that Usmanov “owns over 29 per cent of the shares in British football club Arsenal”. Surely an inadvertent

HOW TOFFEES GOT STUCK IN A RUT

Everton in the Premier League

- ◆ Past nine seasons (2013-present)
- ◆ Previous nine seasons (2004-13)

Top-six finishes	1	5
Bottom half finishes	5	1
Average finish	10th	7th
Average points won	52.6*	59.0

*includes projected points total for this season

Most managers for a Premier League club since 2012-13

Watford	14
Leeds	10
Crystal Palace	8
Everton	7
Chelsea	7

◆ Of the ten players who have joined Everton since the summer, only two, Asmir Begovic and Demarai Gray, started against Newcastle on Thursday

◆ Andros Townsend made an appearance off the bench. None of the others featured

From 1993 until cutting ties at the start of this month, Moshiri, top, worked for or with Usmanov, bottom, who has been sanctioned by the UK government after Russia’s invasion of Ukraine

mistake, given that when Usmanov started buying into Arsenal, in 2007, he officially did so jointly with Moshiri, through an offshore company, Red and White Holdings. Moshiri funded his purchase of Everton by selling Usmanov his Arsenal shares, but questions were raised in 2017 when documents in the leaked Paradise Papers suggested Moshiri’s Arsenal stake had been a “gift” from Usmanov in the first place.

The implication that Usmanov ultimately paid for the purchase of Everton was denied by Moshiri, who dismissed the documents, which came from the Isle of Man law firm Appleby, as a “mistake”. Another mistake occurred when a Russian media company with close links to Usmanov initially reported Moshiri’s Everton takeover as “Russian businessman Alisher Usmanov becomes the new owner of Everton”. The report was taken down and a representative of Moshiri told *The Sunday Times* that “Usmanov has never had any equity in Everton”.

Moshiri said at an Everton AGM in 2017, “The reason I got into Arsenal was because my business partner is a

crazy fan of Arsenal and we do most things together,” and Usmanov’s influence at Everton was a source of intrigue before his sanctioning. Agents tell of holding talks about players involved at the club on Usmanov’s yacht and Rafa Benítez met Moshiri on Usmanov’s yacht in Sardinia in June before being appointed manager.

When Lampard was interviewed for the job, he walked into his meeting with Moshiri to find him on a Zoom call with Usmanov. In July Usmanov’s nephew, Sarvar Ismailov, 26, was placed on Everton’s board but stood down in November “for personal and health reasons”. A few weeks later he appeared in court charged with grievous bodily harm, alongside his brother, who was also accused of assaulting a female model.

The case against Ismailov, who had also been commercial and sporting director of Everton Women, was later discontinued due to “lack of evidence”.

Moshiri had already sold 50 per cent of his holding in USM before Russia’s invasion of Ukraine and plans to dispose of the rest, though at present he cannot do so because all British shareholders in Russian companies have had their stakes frozen by Putin. Moshiri has cut other ties with USM, stood down from its board and suspended all Everton sponsorships by Usmanov’s firms.

When Usmanov was sanctioned, the club acted with speed to rid themselves of any associations, with cherry pickers clunking through the night at Goodison Park to remove branding. The stadium has been a site of demonstrations of support for Ukraine. The grand old club need their fresh start, and for associations with Usmanov to become only an unfortunate footnote from the past, as new history is written.



ON TV TODAY

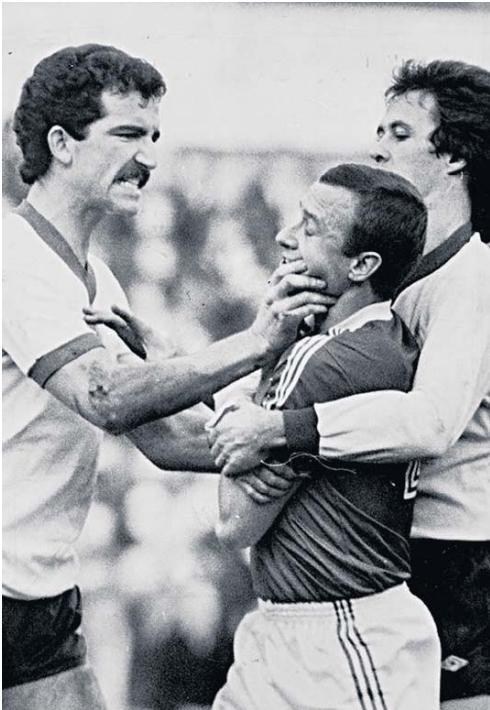
Crystal Palace v Everton

11.45am ITV, kick-off 12.30 pm

The story goes that the players all looked at one another as though their new manager was mad, but, in one of the greatest stories in the history of sport, Clough was as good as his word. Forest went on to achieve what has become known as “the miracle”: earning promotion, winning the title and then two European Cups in Clough’s first five years at the club. Even today, there is a reason why modern managers such as Pep Guardiola and José Mourinho will always reference Clough’s achievements as being the greatest ever when he is brought into the conversation. It’s hard to disagree.

Fans of both clubs, Forest and Liverpool, talk about their teams of the late 1970s as being the best they ever had. The sides locked horns in some of the most-watched games of the era, leaving an extraordinary imprint on a whole generation of football fans.

The most famous was a European Cup clash in 1978 that was shown with extended highlights on ITV right across the regions, as we called them



Liverpool’s Graeme Souness, left, and Phil Neal grapple with Forest’s John McGovern during a fiery 1980 clash



ON TV TODAY

Nottingham Forest

v Liverpool 5.15pm

ITV, kick-off 6pm

then. That match featured a young Garry Birtles scoring his first goal for his home-town club and ended with the blond Mancunian Colin Barrett smashing home a magnificent volley, narrated beautifully by the brilliant Hugh Johns, as Forest won 2-0.

We all talked about it breathlessly in school the next morning. It was European football at its best, played out by two English teams. Forest went on to win the European Cup that season and became something of a nemesis over the next few years for a usually dominant Liverpool team.

Indeed, Liverpool didn’t score against Forest in 9½ hours over those neck-and-neck seasons when they fought one another to a standstill, like two great warriors, for trophies – and remember, that was the Liverpool team who scored 85 goals (conceding only 16) in winning the league in 1978-79.

Forest’s famous 42-game unbeaten league run (finally surpassed by Arsenal’s Invincibles in 2003-04) was ended by Liverpool at Anfield. Clough walked on to the pitch and

clapped his team off that day, while the Kop and the home team celebrated as though they had won a trophy. That’s how much it meant to Liverpool to beat Forest at that time.

This white-hot rivalry had dimmed by the mid-1980s, as Forest lost the extraordinary momentum of the end of the previous decade, but the fans never forgot it and it would come alive again in the late 1980s. It would become associated with the tragedy of Hillsborough when the two sides met in an FA Cup semi-final in April 1989.

This will be remembered today, as they play once again in the FA Cup, this time in the quarter-finals. And it will be good not only for fans of the clubs but for those right across football to see one of the greatest rivalries reignited. After all, as Birtles always says proudly when he goes to Anfield to commentate: “See those small gaps in years on the banners, when a great Liverpool team didn’t win any trophies? That was us, that was. That was Forest.” That’s why the song will be sung this evening.

THE FOOTBALL
INTERVIEW

WITH JONATHAN NORTHCROFT

The show is called *Playmakers* and turns the WAGs of Swedish sports stars into vloggers, who post video diaries of their lives with their partners. It is shown online by Sweden's TV4 and season five began on Thursday – featuring Eldina Ahmic and her boyfriend, Dejan Kulusevski.

The first clips are fun, and include Eldina and Dejan going to a café and goofing about, and singing at the top of their voices in the car. Eldina “was nervous,” Dejan says, “me less because I know that for some years everything I do comes out in a way or another.”

Eldina is doing all the filming on her phone and agreed to the show because she wanted to try something new, and Dejan is supportive. “Everything she wants to do, I’m in it and happy for it,” he says. He looks an absolute natural on camera and, chatting via Zoom from Tottenham Hotspur’s training ground, grins when he talks about it. “You have to be careful what you show to people because people cannot wait to bring you down but I think that I am maturing a lot and the more the time goes, the more comfortable I feel in who I am,” he says.

“So here I am. I don’t care what will happen and what I say. I just love being myself and keep doing me.”

Perhaps this mindset helps to explain how Kulusevski, only ten games into his Spurs career, already looks an established force in the Premier League, and as though he has been playing with Harry Kane and Son Heung-min for years. The Swede, 21, arrived on loan in January, having completed 90 minutes only three times for his parent club Juventus since the 2021-22 season began, but is making the Juventus head coach Max Allegri’s distrust of him look ridicu-

‘Zlatan opened doors for people like me in Sweden’

With his boyhood idol driving him forwards, Dejan Kulusevski is feeling at home with Spurs, and loving living in London



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lous, with six goal involvements in his past seven games.

It seems Kulusevski has just rolled into the Premier League, being himself and “doing Dejan”, which means expressing a talent that first brought wider attention in Sweden at the age of seven, and a controversial move from the Stockholm club IF Brommapojkarna to Atalanta at 15. He is tailor-made for English football with his speed, strength, technique, creative eye and ability to make quick and right decisions, and relief fuels him too.

Having played regularly for Juventus under Andrea Pirlo, his demotion to impact substitute under Allegri “was hard. Life is a lot of ups and downs. You really have to be strong when things are not going the way you think they should be going, you have to keep always being humble, always being nice, but it’s very frustrating when you love something but you cannot show it,” he says.

“I knew I needed a change and I’m very, very happy that Tottenham believed in me, and the coach [Antonio Conte] wanted me. I have a lot of motivation to do good because I know I have the qualities and I love to work.”

Ever since departing Sweden young, “every year I’ve been thinking about Premier League, Premier League,” and now that he is here, “it could not be better... I’m just trying to believe that I’m living in London and playing for a club like Tottenham.”

Often a No10 or second striker for Sweden, and used in numerous roles by Juventus, he thanks Conte for giving him a fixed position, to the right of Kane in Tottenham’s 3-4-2-1. “I think football is evolving and I am a guy who cannot stand still and I want to move in big, big spaces. I really find my space where I’m playing and every game have had chances to score.

“I don’t have to speak about the quality of Son and Kane, because it is ridiculous what they are doing. They are fantastic footballers and really good humans, it is easy to play with them. We are having fun when we play and I think that’s really important, and that we keep helping each other, because the more we help each other the more we’re going to win.”

Eldina, 27, has put her playing career on hold, but was a footballer

too, a midfielder for Bosnia and BP’s women’s team. Like her, Kulusevski was born in Stockholm with Balkan heritage. Katica, his mother, was born in North Macedonia, while Stefan, his father, was born in Sweden to North Macedonian parents. Dejan played for Macedonia Under-17 before switching to Sweden and wishes he hadn’t had to choose. “If I could play with both national teams I would do it,” he says.

His parents’ roots are in the small city of Ohrid, a World Heritage site nestling by one of Europe’s most gorgeous lakes. “It’s an amazing place. My father has gone there every summer for 40 years. Me and my sister go every summer and really love being there and being with our cousins,” he says.

“It is a different air and I love taking my friends. Not a lot of people know about North Macedonia and they always get surprised when I show them how beautiful it is.”

He grew up idolising Zlatan Ibrahimovic – born in Sweden to parents from Bosnia and Croatia – and Ibrahimovic has been one of Kulusevski’s biggest champions. When the Sweden coach, Janne Andersson, dropped Kulusevski to the bench against France in 2020, Ibrahimovic tweeted: “What a f***ing joke.”

Kulusevski attempts to explain what Ibrahimovic means to him. “For children like me, who come from a different country, and have blood from Macedonia... it’s amazing. I think Zlatan opened doors to us people in Sweden that nobody can imagine. He really helped every young kid... kids [who were] outsiders. When I got older and started playing and he started men-



Kulusevski enjoys being part of his girlfriend Eldina’s video diaries

MAN CITY OWNER SALUTES SECURITY PROVIDED BY ‘WAR CRIMINAL’ ASSAD

The Manchester City owner Sheikh Mansour bin Zayed al-Nahyan welcomed Syria’s president, Bashar al-Assad, to Abu Dhabi on Friday. Assad was embarking on his first trip to an Arab country since the start of the Syrian civil war 11 years ago – in which he has been accused of war crimes. Sheikh Mansour called Syria a “fundamental pillar of Arab security” and said that the UAE was “keen to strengthen co-operation with it”.

The US said it was “profoundly disappointed and troubled” by the meeting. According to Ukrainian intelligence on Thursday, Assad agreed to supply Russia with 40,000 mercenaries to aid Vladimir Putin in his invasion of the country, with additional Syrian volunteers encouraged to join the conflict.



Sheikh Mansour, right, meets Assad, who is accused of helping Putin

tioning my name, I was like a kid at Christmas. It’s a big thing for me just knowing that Zlatan likes me.”

With Zlatan, 40, now out of international retirement, he and Kulusevski are in Andersson’s squad for World Cup play-offs against the Czech Republic and Poland and it will be another chance to learn from the (and Zlatan would very much agree with this description) great man. “I listen to him a lot, taking his advice, because he knows what he’s talking about and he’s a very humble person and a very funny guy.”

Humble? “He’s actually a very humble guy. I don’t think at that age to keep doing what he’s doing, to keep working... you have achieved so much and you want more. He’s a role model in many ways,” Kulusevski says.

Kulusevski is “very grateful for not being just from one country and staying there”. He believes his heritage has opened him to different people and cultures, as did joining Atalanta so young. “I moved to Italy when I was 15, without parents, going to school in a language that I didn’t understand. I did a lot of hard things but it helped

In Italy it was harder to meet people, but here there are a lot of Swedish people and I have a lot of friends’



ON TV TODAY

Tottenham v West Ham
Sky Main Event/PL, kick-off 4.30pm

me a lot. I would do the same again.” He speaks Swedish, Macedonian, English, Italian, German “and I’m starting to understand Spanish” so multinational London suits him. “The thing I like is I know a lot of people. In Italy it was harder to meet people, but here there are a lot of Swedish people and I have a lot of friends, and after the football it’s nice to know you’ve got a life; that you don’t have to go home and only think about training and games,” he says. “I think it has helped me a lot, just being able to be a normal 21-year-old and a happy guy.”

Juventus, who bought him for €35 million (about £29 million) from Atalanta in January 2020, offloaded Kulusevski for €10 million on an 18-month loan, with Spurs obliged to make it permanent for a further €35 million if certain conditions are met. He wants it to happen. “I love the club, my team-mates, the coach, but I take nothing for granted,” he says.

What about the song, based on an Abba hit, that Spurs fans have for him – “Gimme gimme gimme a ginger from Sweden”? “I love it, of course,” he grins. “All my friends send it to me all the time and it’s really funny.”



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BRATHWAITE GIVES EN

Time running out to set target and bowl West Indies out after their captain's lengthy vigil

SIMON WILDE



Cricket Correspondent

There have been times during this Barbados Test match when the chances of a positive result appeared to be down to two – slim and none – and at lunch on this fourth day Slim was definitely heading out of town. West Indies had just negotiated the morning session for the loss of only night-watchman Alzarri Joseph, caught at gully off Ben Stokes during a lung-bursting seven-over spell, and take their weary opponents beyond 150 overs in the field.

But you have got to hand it to Joe Root's side. They may be short of world-beaters but they keep going with admirable determination, whatever the odds. They had kept West Indies to under two runs an over before lunch and after it they did the same, only this time they got their reward in the wickets column as well. The last five West Indies wickets fell for 60 runs in 36.5 overs and England walked off with a lead of 96, an advantage their openers extended to 136 by stumps.

It would be easy to look at the 187.5 overs it took England to dismiss West Indies (their longest hard yakka since Mount Maunganui in 2019) and put it down as another illustration of their inadequacies on good pitches, and to an extent it was, but better sides than theirs would struggle on the surfaces they have come across on this tour. Look at how Australia are faring on Pakistan's pitches.

And, relatively speaking, there were success stories. Jack Leach, having bowled nine overs on Thursday and 35 on Friday, came back for more, and came back well, adding another 25.5 overs to his tally and conceding only 21 for the wickets of Kraigg Brathwaite for a monumental 160 spanning six sessions and Joshua Da Silva.

Commendable though Leach's efforts were, the more exciting success was Saqib Mahmood, who took two for 58 – his first Test wickets – from 27 overs. Within this, he delivered a post-lunch spell of 5-2-6-1 that was really the highlight of the day. He was brought on this tour – ahead of the Two Who Shall Not Be Named – precisely because of his old-ball skills, the tailing reverse and the wicket-to-wicket line.

There was a feeling the previous day that he needed to take off the handbrake and bowl as fast as he could, and get in closer to the stumps



A watchful Lees plays a defensive shot as England negotiated a tricky period to reach the close without losing a wicket

JASON CAIRNDUFF/REUTERS



Fisher leaps to catch Holder off the bowling of Mahmood for 12 to give the Lancashire fast bowler his first wicket for England in Test cricket

to force the greater body-rotation that accentuates swerve through the air, and this he now seemed to do with a ball 151 overs old when he was thrown it again.

Jason Holder's wicket was not a classic, but Mahmood will not care after the cruelty of Friday's no-ball which denied him the wicket of Jermaine Blackwood with a delicious yorker. To the second ball after lunch, Holder, who had looked shaky in the 40 minutes before the break, inexplicably heaved Mahmood high into the leg side where Matthew Fisher took a good tumbling catch under a ball that swirled in the cross-wind. Fielder and bowler looked equally relieved.

He soon came close to adding the wicket of Da Silva, whom he beat on the inside edge. Umpire Joel Wilson gave it out on the field but Da Silva's review revealed the faintest of inside edges. He eventually got his second wicket when he trapped Veerasammy

The Holder wicket was not a classic, but Mahmood will not care after the cruelty of Friday's no-ball

MOST OVERS IN AN INNINGS FOR ENGLAND in Tests since 1946

Tom Cartwright v Australia, 1964	77
Tony Lock v Pakistan, 1962	73
Phil Tufnell v New Zealand, 1992	71
Jack Leach v West Indies, 2022	69.5

ENGLAND PLENTY TO DO

ENGLAND'S LONGEST RUNS WITH ONLY ONE TEST WIN

◆ Wins ◆ Losses ◆ Draws

25 Tests: Jan 1987 to Aug 1989



16 Tests: Aug 1979 to Jul 1981



17 Tests: Jul 1963 to Feb 1965



16 Tests: Aug 1995 to Jan 1997



15 Tests: Feb 2021 to Mar 2022*



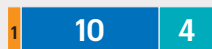
15 Tests: Jul 1965 to Aug 1966



15 Tests: Jan 1984 to Dec 1984



15 Tests: Feb 1992 to Aug 1993



*not including the current Test

TIME TO SEND FOR PARKY?

England's experimental bowling attack has struggled to take wickets on a lifeless pitch in Barbados. If the third Test in Grenada delivers a similarly docile pitch, Lancashire leg spinner Matt Parkinson, inset, could earn a call-up, either instead



of or alongside Jack Leach. The 25-year-old has had a successful run of debuts: he became the youngest Lancashire player to take five wickets on county debut in 2016, and took five wickets in his first IT20 against New Zealand three years later.

Permaul leg-before with a third new ball that was in its 19th over. It took until 40 minutes before tea to shift Brathwaite. The West Indies captain continued his Zen-like progress before finally playing down the wrong line to Leach, who spun one sharply past the outside edge to take off stump – a fine ball. It was Leach's 214th delivery to him, but only his third with the third cherry.

Brathwaite's vigil was remarkable for someone who had already spent 150 overs in the field supervising his troops. In all, he faced 489 balls (seventh on the list among West Indians) and spent just over 700 minutes at the crease (behind only Brian Lara's epic innings of 400 not out and 375), but he did not hurt England on this fourth day, adding only 51 from 152 balls, and once he was out the West Indies innings ambled to a conclusion.

My, how Leach laboured for his big prize. At the Gabba, Leach conceded

SCOREBOARD

Second Test match West Indies v England

Bridgetown (fourth day of five): *England, with all second-innings wickets in hand, are 136 runs ahead of West Indies*

England First Innings 507-9 dec (J E Root 153, B A Stokes 120, D W Lawrence 91).

Second Innings

A Z Lees not out 18

Z Crawley not out 21

Extras (b 1) 1

Total (no wkt, 15 overs) 40

Bowling Roach 4-3-5-0; Permaul 6-0-13-0; Seales 3-0-16-0; Brathwaite 1-0-5-0; Holder 1-1-0-0.

West Indies First Innings (o/nt 288-4)

*K C Brathwaite b Leach 160

A S Joseph c Lawrence b Stokes 19

J O Holder c Fisher b Mahmood 12

†J Da Silva lbw b Leach 33

K A J Roach lbw b Woakes 1

V Permaul lbw b Mahmood 5

J N T Seales not out 5

Extras (b 10, lb 4, nb 8) 22

Total (187.5 overs) 411

Fall 1-14, 2-83, 3-101, 4-284, 5-336, 6-351, 7-385, 8-392, 9-403.

Bowling Woakes 23-10-51-1; Fisher 25-5-67-1; Leach 69.5-27-118-3; Stokes 29-10-65-2; Mahmood 27-6-58-2; Lawrence 8-2-21-1; Root 6-1-17-0.

Umpires J Wilson and N Duguid.

TV umpire L Reifer. **Reserve umpire**

G Brathwaite. **Match referee** R Richardson.

Series details

First Test Match drawn (Sir Vivian Richards Stadium, North Sound). **Third: March**

24-28 (National Cricket Stadium, St George's, Grenada).

Mike Atherton

Leach may have lacked variety and devil but this was a pitch to force bowlers into a career change



The surprise was not that there were so few in the ground for the first two sessions, but so many. The alternative delights of Barbados must surely have crossed the minds of supporters on a rain-splattered morning – surfing at Bathsheba, walking Cattlewash beach on the wild and beautiful east coast, watching the horses at the Garrison Savannah – as the second Test fell into a coma before their very eyes.

Impromptu games of road tennis around the perimeter edges generated interest. Over in the party stand pink bodies were turned towards the stage and the tents offering the local brew. In the afternoon the sound system hopefully offered up *Sweet Caroline*, the anthem for drunken youth, but got no response, the surest sign that the cricket had sent everyone into a slumber.

In the middle Jack Leach wheeled away dutifully, bowling the same ball time and again and hoping in vain for a different result, so highlighting the essential truth behind Einstein's witticism. He was already 44 overs in by the time the fourth day began, his only wicket the result of a long-hop that had been cut to point early on the third. By lunch, 16 more fruitless overs had been added to his tally for only ten more runs.

Leach bowled as he had in Antigua, which is to say accurately but without imagination. His trajectory is flat, his line straight. In the age of DRS that is the default, as spinners target the pads in the knowledge that technology and umpires are more forgiving than they were. When the ball is turning, that will bring results (and may yet in the second innings), but when there is little help from below, more enticement occasionally above the batsman's eyeline is required.

That said, bowling finger spin is no easy task in the Caribbean or at the Kensington Oval, where the highest wicket-takers are some of those renowned fast bowlers of yesteryear. One of them, Curtly Ambrose (with 52 wickets on this ground he is one behind Courtney Walsh), was commenting up in an eyrie in the Marshall Stand and was chuntering on behalf of the bowlers' union.

This is another graveyard strip, not quite as sleepy as Antigua, perhaps, but another to send



Matt Fisher appeals unsuccessfully for a dismissal against Brathwaite

bowlers to their beds bone-weary and thinking of alternative careers. All the bowlers' figures in this match demand that context is not ignored and there have been enough examples to know that better bowlers than those on show here have struggled in inhospitable conditions. Twenty years ago to the month, Shane Warne toiled his way through 70 overs in Cape Town.

Successful slow bowlers on this ground are few and far between. Lance Gibbs, the tall off spinner, whose long fingers enabled him to spin the ball on even the glassiest surface, is the leading wicket-taker. Sonny Ramadhin and Alf Valentine, the duo who lifted West Indies in an era before pace began to dominate, took 30 wickets between them here. The leading foreign spinner? Jim Laker, England's great, with 13 wickets in two matches.

Laker, Valentine and Ramadhin all played in a Test match on this ground, conducted at an even more funereal rate, in 1954. To the utter bemusement of the locals, used to seeing batsmen on the go and full of intent, England crawled to 180 in 150 overs, with Ramadhin and Valentine bowling 105 overs between them for 101 runs. And this from some of England's most celebrated players, Sir Len Hutton, Denis Compton, Peter May and

Tom Graveney among them. It is a reminder that Test cricket has always had, and probably always will have, dull periods.

England got walloped on that occasion something Kraigg Brathwaite, all duty and discipline, was determined to avoid. Having captained for more than 150 overs in the field, it was a wonderful physical and mental achievement to come out and bat for even longer. He will not go down in the pantheon of West Indian batsmen, but he takes his position, as an heir to the likes of Clive Lloyd and Viv Richards, seriously, and is full of grim determination.

It was a family occasion for him. His father and aunts were sitting in the old Kensington Stand, where the locals used to gather in years gone by, in colourful dress and good humour. His mother was high up in the Worrell, Weekes and Walcott Stand, right behind the bowler's arm, watching her son live in Test cricket for the first time, having flown in from the States for the match.

Brathwaite was clearly eager to give her full value for the airfare, having spent all but 20 overs during the first four days on the field. His personal duel with Leach went deep into the afternoon. Finally, after bowling 214 balls at him of which 184 had not been scored off, Leach spun one past Brathwaite's forward defence to end an innings that spanned 699 minutes, the third-longest by a West Indian. There are some batsmen who can be bored into submission, but Brathwaite is not one of those – something every bowler would do well to remember.

The alternative delights of Barbados must surely have crossed the minds of supporters

HAMILTON NIGHTMARE BECOMES A REALITY

REBECCA CLANCY



Motor Racing Correspondent

While Lewis Hamilton was having a nightmare day, Ferrari’s Charles Leclerc was living the dream with the first pole position of the season at the Bahrain Grand Prix.

In pre-season testing the Mercedes had looked difficult to drive and not on the level of Ferrari or old foe Red Bull. Leclerc’s pole, the tenth of his career, confirmed the superior pace of Ferrari, and he will be joined on the front row by Red Bull’s Max Verstappen, who was 0.1sec slower in second.

Hamilton insisted during pre-season testing that the car was not good enough to be fighting for wins, at least in the early stages of the season, and while the sceptics dismissed the claims, the qualifying performance at the Sakhir circuit suggested that Mercedes have a lot of work to do.

Hamilton could only manage fifth-fastest, nearly 0.7sec off the pole time, while George Russell, his new teammate, was ninth.

Russell was beaten by his predecessor, Valtteri Bottas, who had an impressive outing in his debut qualifying session for Alpha Romeo to finish

STARTING GRID FOR BAHRAIN GRAND PRIX

Driver	Team	Time
1 Charles Leclerc (Monaco)	Ferrari	1:30.558
2 Max Verstappen (Neth)	Red Bull	1:30.681
3 Carlos Sainz (Sp)	Ferrari	1:30.687
4 Sergio Pérez (Mex)	Red Bull	1:30.921
5 Lewis Hamilton (GB)	Mercedes	1:31.238
6 Valtteri Bottas (Fin)	Alfa Romeo	1:31.560
7 Kevin Magnussen (Den)	Haas	1:31.808
8 Fernando Alonso (Sp)	Alpine	1:32.195
9 George Russell (GB)	Mercedes	1:32.216
10 Pierre Gasly (Fr)	AlphaTauri	1:32.338
11 Esteban Ocon (Fr)	Alpine	1:31.782
12 Mick Schumacher (Ger)	Haas	1:31.998
13 Lando Norris (GB)	McLaren	1:32.008
14 Alexander Albon (Thai)	Williams	1:32.664
15 Zhou Guanyu (China)	Alfa Romeo	1:33.543
16 Yuki Tsunoda (Japan)	AlphaTauri	1:32.750
17 Nico Hülkenberg (Ger)	Aston Martin	1:32.777
18 Daniel Ricciardo (Aus)	McLaren	1:32.945
19 Lance Stroll (Can)	Aston Martin	1:33.032
20 Nicholas Latifi (Can)	Williams	1:33.634

sixth and line up alongside his former team-mate Hamilton on the grid.

“I’m not saying I’m relieved. In general I’m really happy with the day compared to where we’ve been in the last two weeks,” Hamilton said.

“It has been a bit of a nightmare to drive, but we kept working and I’m proud of everyone. The guys ahead of us are in another league. In general I’m happy where we are, it’s not the

front row but we will make improvements as well as we can.

“These guys [Red Bull and Ferrari] will be going ahead, we are not in the fight with them, my battle is with the guys behind us. Their performance was quite a bit ahead of us.”

Toto Wolff, the Mercedes team principal, said they had to be “realistic” about their performance, which is that they are the “third-quickest team on the grid”.

“Let’s see – I’m a little bit wary about where we will be tomorrow, but in any case it’s learning,” he said.

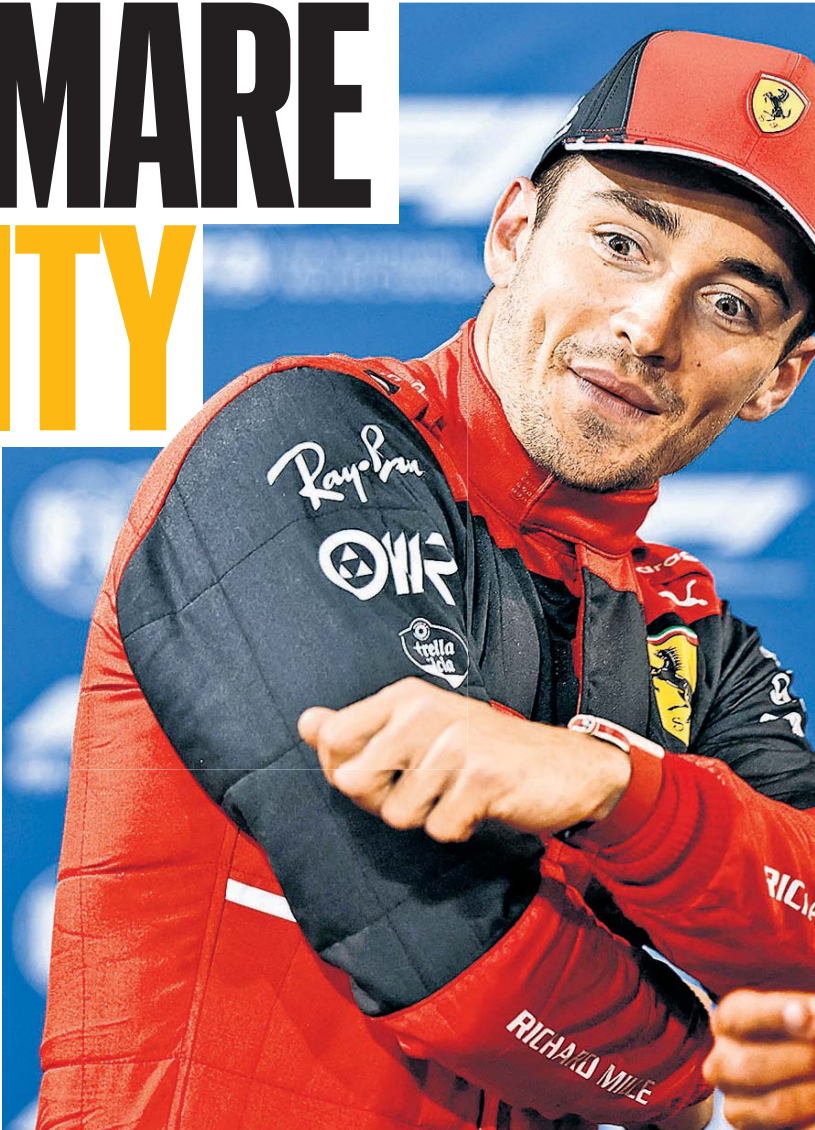
Qualifying was the first time this year that all the teams had revealed the true pace of their cars after the huge regulation changes that came in over the winter. Pre-season testing gave a flavour, with Red Bull and Ferrari looking the favourites, and qualifying allowed them both to live up to the hype.

Ferrari will also fill the third spot of the grid with Carlos Sainz, while the other Red Bull of Sergio Pérez is fourth.

Verstappen was asked if he was pleased to see Mercedes off the pace and replied with a smile: “Very. Very.”

The Dutchman had said inconsistencies in his runs had cost him pole position and that the whole of qualifying had been “a bit hit and miss” for him. “We have a good car and it’s a good day. It’s a good start to be here,” Verstappen said.

“Not fantastic but also not too bad, otherwise you cannot be in this position, so there are a few things to look



into and try to extract to be better for next time.

“You want to be perfect in qualifying but you also want to make sure your car is working for the race because the points are scored there.”

Leclerc will be looking to convert his first pole since Azerbaijan last year into a win, with Ferrari looking for their first victory since Singapore 2019.

“It feels good. The last two years have been incredibly difficult for the team. We were quite hopeful that this

Leclerc will be looking to convert his first pole since Azerbaijan last year into a win

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Leclerc, left, who starts on pole today, reflects on a good day of qualifying with Sainz, his Ferrari team-mate

new opportunity for us was an opportunity to be back in the front and I think we have worked extremely well as a team to [be] in a position to fight for better places,” the Monegasque said.

After the first test in Barcelona it had seemed as if McLaren would be in the mix and pushing Ferrari but they struggled at the second test and appeared not to have found a solution to their troubles.

It was a disappointing qualifying

for the team. Daniel Ricciardo was knocked out in the first session and the Australian will start in 18th place, while Lando Norris was out in the second and will start in 13th.

Perhaps the happiest person on the grid was Kevin Magnussen. Two weeks ago the Dane was without a drive in F1. He had been forced to sit out last year after effectively losing his seat at Haas to Nikita Mazepin but then found himself replacing the Russian, who has now been sanctioned by

2022 FORMULA ONE SCHEDULE

March 20	Bahrain, 3pm start
March 27	Saudi Arabia, 6pm
April 10	Australia, 6am
April 24	Italy (Emilia Romagna), 2pm
May 8	United States (Miami), 8.30pm
May 22	Spain, 2pm
May 29	Monaco, 2pm
June 12	Azerbaijan, 12pm
June 19	Canada, 7pm
July 3	Great Britain, 3pm
July 10	Austria, 2pm
July 24	France, 2pm
July 31	Hungary, 2pm
August 28	Belgium, 2pm
September 4	Netherlands, 2pm
September 11	Italy (Monza), 2pm
October 2	Singapore, 1pm
October 9	Japan, 6am
October 23	United States (Texas) 8pm
October 30	Mexico, 8pm
November 13	Brazil, 6pm
November 20	Abu Dhabi, 1pm

All races are live on Sky Sports F1

the EU, at the start of this month back at his old team. The 29-year-old made it through to the top-ten shoot-out, to start the race in seventh, the first time Haas have been through to the third part of qualifying since Brazil 2019.

“It’s crazy. This is all we ever could’ve hoped for – I’m speechless,” Magnussen said. “The last couple of weeks have been insane. Getting here, learning about the car, seeing that it is maybe a pretty good one and being so anxious about this qualifying. To really see how it is and then finding out it is really good.”

ON TV TODAY

Bahrain Grand Prix
Sky Sports F1/Main Event, start 3pm

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Send your letters to:
The Sports Editor,
The Sunday Times,
1 London Bridge St
London, SE1 9GF
email: sportletters
@sunday-times.co.uk

There has to be another solution to the red card (England v Ireland coverage, March 13) to keep rugby watchable. Yes, there are horrific injuries in the sport and steps have to be taken to mitigate these, but surely the spirit of the game must be preserved. Perhaps 20 minutes in the sin-bin for a red card, or sending the offender off for the whole game but with a replacement substitute allowed to come on, may be a solution.
Paul Molle, via email

Stephen Jones’s sneering dismissal of England’s superb 14-man performance was entirely predictable. However, accusing the referee of bias in awarding scrum penalties to England because he felt “guilty” about sending off Charlie Ewels was as bizarre as it was reprehensible.
Keith Lane, Bosworth

Your England v Ireland report states that “...Gibson-Park ushered both Jack Conan and Finlay Bealham over for the clinching scores”. An amazing feat considering the scum half was in the stands at the time.
Neil McLoughry, Chisworth
Editor’s note Apologies to all readers who wrote in about this error.

I read with interest Rod Liddle’s article on undesired footballing records. It made me think of my team’s — Bristol City — unwanted record that, according to the CIES Football Observatory, we have been awarded the fewest penalties since the start of the 2018-19 season across the 31 biggest leagues in Europe. I reckon that opposition defenders could drop a grenade in the box and the ref would still be unsighted!
Nick Forward, Redditch

It’s interesting to read David Walsh’s column where he says he doesn’t look back at Chelsea’s trophies under Roman Abramovich and think less of what they achieved. This is a surprise given that he made his name with the institutionalised doping practised by Lance Armstrong and co in cycling. I thought he was an advocate of “fair play”. So actual doping is bad but financial doping is OK? Make your mind up, David.
Michael Edwards, via email

Mike Atherton fondly remembers the “joyous” ARG at St John’s in Antigua but overlooks maybe its most famous occasion, when Brian Lara broke the highest individual Test scoring record in making 375 runs in an innings in 1994. (Mike probably regrets that he only made 137 in that match.) Holidaying on the island some months later, it seemed that every Antigua resident taxi driver, barman and waiter we spoke to had been there to witness the event. The ground capacity must have been exceeded five times over that day.
Lawrie Thornton, Sutton Coldfield

Jacobs proves he is not a one-hit wonder

Jacobs answered his critics in beating Coleman over 60m

ATHLETICS

Rebecca Myers Belgrade

Marcell Jacobs continued his dominance on the sprint world stage by beating world-record holder and defending champion Christian Coleman to the men’s 60m world title in Belgrade.

Jacobs had said before the race that he would “maybe dip my head ahead” to beat Coleman and that was exactly what happened, with the two men left in suspense on the track as the result went to a photo finish. Italy’s Jacobs, who rose from a low-profile former long jumper to global prominence when he won the Olympic 100m last summer, beat the US’s Coleman, widely regarded as the greatest 60m runner in the world, by three thousandths of a second in 6.41secs. It is a new European record time and he becomes the first Olympic 100m champion to also win the world 60m title.

Jacobs said he was “so happy” and that it was “amazing” to break the

European record. It was the Italian’s first time competing at the World Indoor Championships. He competed at the European Indoor Championships in 2017 in Belgrade as a long jumper and failed to make the final. He also suffered a false start at a previous 60m race in Belgrade this month, but had no such problems in the race yesterday.

Coleman, who took the silver medal, is in the midst of a comeback after serving an 18-month suspension for missed drug tests. He missed out on competing at the Tokyo Olympics as a result but has returned for this indoor season, opening with a world-leading time and a win at the US indoor championships.

Jacobs’ new title is a definitive response to any doubters who might have chalked him down as a one-hit wonder. In beating Coleman, he has felled arguably the greatest 60m runner in the world and undoubtedly raised expectations even higher for his own

performances over the next few months, which include the outdoor World Championships and the European Championships, both this summer. “I can’t wait to go in the outdoor and run and run,” he said.

There were emotional scenes in the Stark Arena on Saturday morning as Ukraine’s Yaroslava Mahuchikh won gold in the women’s high jump. The 20-year-old had fled her home in Dnipro and travelled overland for three days to reach Serbia, after what she described as “hundreds of phone calls, many changes of direction, explosions, fires, and air raid sirens.” Her team-mate, Iryna Geraschenko, who fled Kyiv with her husband and dog but no kit, finished in fifth place.

Mahuchikh said that she had found it hard to focus on competition, with her thoughts occupied by the war unfolding in her home country. “To jump here

was so difficult psychologically because my heart remains in my country,” she said. She failed in her first attempt at 1.92m and twice in her attempts at 2.00m before steeling herself and jumping 2.02m to win the gold medal. She received rapturous applause from the crowd.

“It was very important for me, my family, my country,” Mahuchikh said. The reigning Olympic champion, Mariya Lasitskene of Russia, was absent due to World Athletics’ ban on Russian and Belarusian athletes following the invasion of Ukraine.

Top British medal hope, Keely Hodgkinson, pulled out of the women’s 800m heats on Saturday, citing a “niggle” in her right quad muscle and saying she did not want to risk jeopardising the summer competitions, which include the outdoor World Championships and home Commonwealth Games. She had hoped to win gold today after setting a new British record in the event in Birmingham last month.

“The summer [is] just too big to risk anything at this stage,” she explained of “the bigger picture”.



Racing

TODAY'S RACECARDS

Carlisle

Going: good to soft-good in places on chase course
Rob Wright's tips: 1.50 Ask The Doc. 2.20 Geromino. 2.55 Uncle Alastair. 3.25 Snowy Clouds. 4.00 The King Of May. 4.35 Barnay. 5.05 Domain Des L'Aube.

1.50 EVERY RACE LIVE ON RACINGTV MAIDEN HURDLE

14-2242Ask The Doc	15 (T,BF) O Greenall	6-11-6	Craig Nichol
2-20Blackwell Bay	80 O Greenall	5-11-6	N Schofield
3-254Forpaddythelumber	25 (P) D McCain	6-11-6	B Hughes
42054Melvich Bay	24 D Brooke	5-10-13	J Kingston

2.20 STACEY BRADLEY'S BIRTHDAY BASH NOVICES' LIMITED HANDICAP CHASE

111200Geromino	50 (T) D McCain	6-11-8	B Hughes
2114F2Pittempton Power	20 (CD) Ewan Whillans	7-10-3	C Bewley
362215Avoid De Master	51 (D) S Corbett	8-10-3	Craig Nichol

Betting: 4-5 Geromino, 13-8 Pittempton Power, 7-1 Avoid De Master

2.55 AGLIONBY VETERANS' HANDICAP CHASE

1P-1PPPSome Chaos	50 (P,D) M Scudamore	11-11-12	B Poste
274625Belami Des Pictons	25 (BF,D) V Williams	11-11-9	C Deutsch
327322Uncle Alastair	32 N Richards	10-11-3	B Hughes
401P-66Capel Stile	45 (P,CD) N Richards	10-11-3	D McMenamin
51P-53Smooth Stepper	56 (P,CD) A Hales	13-11-2	K Woods
6P-F35PJerryback	35 B Haslam	10-11-2	R McLernon
73-44Up Helly Aa King	25 (T,C,D) N Alexander	11-10-11	C O'Farrell
801030Royal Village	176 (P) M Hammond	10-10-11	Emma Smith-Chaston

Betting: 11-4 Belami Des Pictons, 7-2 Up Helly Aa King, 4-1 Uncle Alastair, 6-1 Jerryback, 10-1 Some Chaos, Royal Village, Chapel Stile, 16-1 Smooth Stepper

3.25 WATCH IRISH RACING ON RACINGTV NOVICES' HANDICAP HURDLE

154231Malpas	10 (T,CD) D McCain	7-11-10	B Hughes
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2/044-3Cockney Beau	43 M Hammond	7-11-1	Miss Becky Smith (3)
345423Augharue	30 W Coltherd	5-11-0	S Coltherd
41-650Snowy Clouds	64 N Richards	6-11-0	Sean Quinlan

Betting: 5-6 Malpas, 100-30 Cockney Beau, 5-1 Snowy Clouds, 6-1 Augharue

4.00 WREAY HANDICAP CHASE

13-104PWhoshotthesheriff	52 (C) P Kirby	8-11-12	Sean Quinlan
22210-PMarown	34 (D) N Richards	8-11-6	D McMenamin
364102The King Of May	14 (P,C) B Ellison	8-11-2	N Moscrop
404600Choungaya	105 (T) M Sowersby	9-10-12	A Anderson (5)
551504Tonto's Spirit	14 D Sayer	10-10-11	C O'Farrell
62-4455Defi Sacre	57 (T) R Hobson	9-10-10	B Hughes

Betting: 3-1 The King Of May, 7-2 Whoshotthesheriff, Defi Sacre, 4-1 Marown, 5-1 Tonto's Spirit, 14-1 Choungaya

4.35 JOIN RACINGTV NOW HANDICAP HURDLE

130-652Malangen	274 (D) Miss L Harrison	7-11-12	T Dowson
2100-00Lucky Lover Boy	84 (P,T,D) O Greenall	7-11-10	Craig Nichol
310400Tommydan	37 J Candlish	7-11-7	Sean Quinlan
432402Barnay	27 (B,CD) J Coulson	7-11-6	T J O'Brien
525342Go Bob Go	28 (P) R M Smith	5-11-3	R Mania
655406Derracrin	14 F Murtagh	5-11-1	T Willmott (5)
723954Strike Of Lighting	20 G Bewley	6-10-11	J Bewley (3)
8P061POld Jewry	20 (CD) D Bourke	8-10-7	K Brogan (3)
930-650Glory	288 (V) V Thompson	6-10-5	Mr F Procter (7)
100P904Pempal	20 M Hammond	7-10-2	A Cawley
111015FKillane	28 (P) D Dixon	7-10-0	P J Kavanagh (5)
1200033Pistol	20 (C) J E O'Conn	13-10-0	Mr J Dixon (7)
1340030Snowed In	44 (P,CD) B Butterworth	13-10-0	B Hughes

Betting: 9-2 Go Bob Go, 5-1 Malangen, 6-1 Pempal, 7-1 Barnay, Killane, 10-1 Pistol, Old Jewry, 12-1 Strike Of Lighting

5.05 COCKLAKES OPEN HUNTERS' CHASE

11-3434Shanroe Street	35 (V,CD) Gregor Walkingshaw	12-12-2	Gregor Walkingshaw
202PP3Dmain Des L'Aube	14 W Easterby	9-11-12	Mr W Easterby
350322Ferocious	18 (T) Miss K Leckenby	8-11-12	Mr Joe Wright (3)
4743-32Geordie B	33 Clive Boulthbee-Brooks	9-11-12	Mr Thomas O'Brien

Betting: 11-10 Dmain Des L'Aube, 11-8 Geordie B, 8-1 Ferocious, 12-1 Shanroe Street

Kempton Park

Going: good (good to soft in places)

1.30 (3m ch) 1 Certainly Red (M Goldstein, 2-1 fav); 2 Uallrightharry (7-1); 3 Ebony Gale (11-1). 6 ran. 5l, 2l. Mrs L Richards. **Total:** £3.10; £6.00, £2.40. **Exacta:** £14.00. **CSF:** £4.73. **Trifecta:** £72.70

2.05 (2m ch) 1 Sebastopol (Stan Sheppard, 9-4 jt-fav); 2 Golden Boy Grey (9-4 jt-fav); 3 Siroco Jo (4-1). 5 ran. **NR:** Caddyhill. 6¼l, 6l, T Lacey. **Total:** £3.25; £1.60, £1.50. **Exacta:** £7.40. **CSF:** £8.09. **Trifecta:** £19.50

2.40 (2m 5f hdl) 1 Press Your Luck (J E Moore, 10-1); 2 Paddys Motorbike (16-1); 3 Annsam (10-1); 4 Jay Bee Why (12-1). 17 ran. 3¼l, 1¼l, C Gordon. **Total:** £11.00; £2.80, £3.90, £3.40, £3.50. **Exacta:** £212.40. **CSF:** £158.49. **Tricast:** £1,668.79. **Trifecta:** £3,479.80

3.15 (2m 4f 110yd ch) 1 Killer Clown (Adam Wedge, 11-2); 2 Pistol Whipped (12-1); 3 Up The Straight (7-2 fav). 10 ran. 8l, 6¼l, Miss E C Lavelle. **Total:** £6.50; £2.00, £3.40, £1.90. **Exacta:** £74.90. **CSF:** £64.42. **Tricast:** £264.71. **Trifecta:** £461.30

3.50 (2m hdl) 1 Malakahna (C J Todd, 8-11 fav); 2 Cool Stone (5-1); 3 Miss Chantelle (16-1). 7 ran. 4l, 7l, Ian Williams. **Total:** £1.73; £1.10, £2.00. **Exacta:** £4.10. **CSF:** £4.86. **Trifecta:** £30.30

4.25 (2m 5f hdl) 1 Earth Lord (T J O'Brien, 5-6 fav); 2 Zacony Rebel (8-1). 4 ran. **NR:** Chavez. 24l, P J Hobbs. **Total:** £1.84. **Exacta:** £6.90. **CSF:** £7.23.

5.00 (2m Flat) 1 Gitche Gumee (Thomas Bellamy, 12-1); 2 Kaleb (12-1); 3 Diamond Egg (16-5). 12 ran. 2¼l, ns. A King. **Total:** £13.00; £3.10, £2.20, £1.50. **Exacta:** £170.40. **CSF:** £147.91. **Trifecta:** £768.30

Placepot: £95.00 Quadpot: £25.60

Newcastle

Going: good

1.58 (2m 46yd hdl) 1 Rock Legend (Jack Andrews, 1-3 fav); 2 Royle Steel (7-2); 3 Balkalin (17-2). 4 ran.

Chepstow

Going: soft

Rob Wright's tips: 2.00 Autonomous Cloud. 2.30 Colonel Keating (nap). 3.05 Scipion. 3.35 Tile Tapper (nb). 4.10 Whitehotchillifili. 4.45 The Boat. 5.15 Hero.

2.00 INVADES RACES DAY PARTY EL CLASSICO NOVICES' HURDLE

1-21Super Survivor	25 (D) J Snowden	6-11-12	G Sheehan
210-33Autonomous Cloud	32 F O'Brien	6-11-5	A P Heskin
3-5Bells Of Rutland	22 T Vaughan	5-11-5	Charlie Price (3)
406-60Gala Des Lys	123 (H) D Faulkner	6-11-5	W T Kennedy
5-566Mourzuok	26 T Vaughan	5-11-5	A Johns
6-12Pimlico Point	61 (T) Kerry Lee	5-11-5	R Patrick

Betting: 6-5 Super Survivor, 15-8 Autonomous Cloud, 7-2 Pimlico Point, 25-1 Bells Of Rutland, Mourzuok, 33-1 Gala Des Lys

2.30 JOIN OUR BET CLUB AT VICKERS.BET HANDICAP CHASE

133-303Jean Genie	29 (T,V) T Vaughan	6-11-9	A Johns
22-P2P2Poldark Cross	31 (P) H Whittington	7-11-9	D Jacob
3/P-052Thomas Patrick	38 (CD) T Lacey	10-11-9	Lilly Pinchin (5)
40-5136Straight Swap	17 C Gordon	7-11-7	T Cannon
522-103Colonel Keating	33 (D) R Rowe	10-11-3	Tabitha Worsley (3)
6-4F315Bring The Action	40 (T,V,D) N Hawke	6-11-3	K Buckley (5)
70424P Petite Power	44 (D) O'Brien	13-11-1	L Harrison (3)
834P31Gats And Co	22 (T,C,D) D Brace	7-11-1	C Brace
950351Mr Katanga	22 (P,C) R Curtis	8-11-0	B R Jones

Betting: 7-4 Mr Katanga, 100-30 Gats And Co, 8-1 Poldark Cross, 10-1 Thomas Patrick, Straight Swap, Colonel Keating, 12-1 others

3.05 IN LOVING MEMORY OF EDWARD BEVAN MAIDEN HURDLE

1506Mac Be Lucky	17 E Williams	5-11-8	A Wedge
26-1522Kilbane	28 (P) D Dixon	7-10-0	D Bass
3P0Rabble Rouser	22 (P) T R George	5-11-8	J J Burke
422-233Scipion	29 T Lacey	6-11-8	S Sheppard

Betting: 4-7 Scipion, 13-8 Phantom Getaway, 25-1 Mac Be Lucky, 33-1 Rabble Rouser

3.35 PROMO CODE GET20 AT VICKERS NOVICES' LIMITED HANDICAP CHASE

10-1561The Widow Maker	35 (H,T,D) C Tizzard	8-11-8	B J Powell
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ROB WRIGHT'S TIP OF THE DAY

Colonel Keating (2.30 Chepstow)

Plenty of horses do not cope with the undulations of the track at Chepstow but Colonel Keating handles it well and looks weighted to take this.

He has raced just twice here, finishing a good third over hurdles in 2019 and then second over this course and distance last February.

Colonel Keating has tackled stronger company on his past two starts, most recently finishing third at Lingfield, and back down in grade he can give promising conditional jockey Tabitha Worsley a seventeenth win of the campaign.

22-1562Yes Indeed	28 Jonjo O'Neill	5-11-4	Jonjo O'Neill Jr
3/421-The Edgar Wallace	122 (T) K Bailey	7-11-3	D Bass
416-123Emir Sacree	74 N Henderson	8-10-13	J Bowen
50-0401Tile Tapper	22 (CD) Chris Honour	8-10-6	B Carver (3)

1.50 (2m 7f 70yd hdl) 1 Serious Charges (Rex Dingle, 7-2 fav); 2 Pulling Stumps (7-1); 3 Welsh Saint (17-2). 12 ran. **NR:** Winningseverything. 6¼l, 16l, A J Honeyball. **Total:** £4.50; £1.70, £2.40, £2.80. **Exacta:** £21.10. **CSF:** £27.95. **Tricast:** £193.83. **Trifecta:** £164.10

2.25 (3m ch) 1 Saint Palais (Harry Bannister, 7-2 jt-fav); 2 Gustavian (17-2); 3 Midnight River (7-1). 7 ran. 3¼l, 1l, R Bandey. **Total:** £4.50; £2.30, £4.20. **Exacta:** £34.30. **CSF:** £30.01. **Trifecta:** £161.20

3.00 (2m 3f 207yd hdl) 1 Beauport (J Nailor, 7-2); 2 Boothill (5-2 fav); 3 Panic Attack (6-1). 11 ran. **NR:** Freedom To Dream. 1l, 15l, N A Twiston-Davies. **Total:** £4.50; £1.70, £1.40, £1.50. **Exacta:** £15.10. **CSF:** £12.89. **Tricast:** £50.94. **Trifecta:** £82.30

3.35 (4m 2f 8yd ch) 1 Screaming Colours (C J Orr, 12-1); 2 Young Dev (10-1); 3 Time To Get Up (11-4 fav); 4 El Paso Wood (80-1). 18 ran. **NR:** Jersey Bean. 10l, 2l, W Durkan. **Total:** £13.00; £2.50, £3.10, £1.50, £9.80. **Exacta:** £131.30. **CSF:** £121.22. **Tricast:** £435.23. **Trifecta:** £1,136.80

4.10 (1m 7f 168yd hdl) 1 Starvoski (David Bass, 10-1); 2 Born To Please (17-2); 3 Rachel Louise (10-1). 7 ran. 9l, nk, K C Bailey. **Total:** £12.10; £4.60, £3.50. **Exacta:** £70.50. **CSF:** £82.08

4.45 (2m 4f ch) 1 Mille Sussurri (Bryan Carver, 5-2 fav); 2 Town Parks (50-1); 3 Neil The Legend (9-2). 7 ran. **NR:** Twotwothree. 8l, 11l, H Fry. **Total:** £3.50; £1.90, £10.30. **Exacta:** £73.30. **CSF:** £66.95. **Tricast:** £537.16. **Trifecta:** £305.40

5.18 (1m 7f 168yd Flat) 1 Issuing Authority (James Bowen, 3-1); 2 Saint Bibiana (20-1); 3 Gaelic Park (5-1). 5 ran. **NR:** Kracka Nut, Rocket Robbo. 4¼l, ¼l, N J Henderson. **Total:** £4.00; £1.70, £4.70. **Exacta:** £48.30. **CSF:** £44.32. **Trifecta:** £107.00

Placepot: £354.80 Quadpot: £115.10

Wolverhampton

Going: standard

4.55 (1m 1f 104yd) 1 Sammy Sunshine (Oisín

Betting: 2-1 The Widow Maker, 11-4 Tile Tapper, 4-1 The Edgar Wallace, 5-1 Yes Indeed, 6-1 Emir Sacree

4.10 KENNETH COX MEMORIAL MARES' HANDICAP HURDLE

122114Bellatrixa	23 V Williams	5-12-0	H Bannister
264142Kissesforkatie	39 J Scott	8-11-13	L Williams
30-6434Whitehotchillifili	36 (T) H Fry	8-11-12	S Bowen
43-1264Volkovka	39 (H) F O'Brien	5-11-10	P Brennan
50-3145Swincombe Fleet	31 (T) A Honeyball	6-10-11	A Coleman

Betting: 9-4 Whitehotchillifili, 5-2 Kissesforkatie, 7-2 Bellatrixa, 5-1 Swincombe Fleet, 13-2 Volkovka

4.45 CAZOO HANDICAP CHASE

12-448P Oxwich Bay	21 (P) E Williams	10-12-3	L Gordon (7)
203312JudeX Lefou	38 (T,BF,D) T Vaughan	7-11-12	A Johns
302-P4Calma Des Bois	19 R Rowe	10-11-10	N F Houlihan (3)
404F06Ballycorr	13 (V) Henry Oliver	7-11-10	L Williams
534P60Hang Tough	22 (P,T) Jonjo O'Neill	8-10-10	Jonjo O'Neill Jr
623-0P Cobra Commander	74 T Symonds	8-10-5	Isabel Williams (3)
7-60P3The Boat	32 (P,D) E Williams	6-10-5	A Wedge
8P20-05Fair To Dream	25 (P) S J Davies	9-10-1	W T Kennedy
904F30Hartland Quay	21 (P,BF) N Hawke	7-10-0	T Buckley (3)
10P005Gaelic Thunder	17 Chris Honour	7-10-0	D Noonan

Betting: 6-4 JudeX Lefou, 9-2 The Boat, 8-1 Hang Tough, 10-1 Hartland Quay, Ballycorr, Celma Des Bois, 14-1 Oxwich Bay, Cobra Commander

5.15 INVADES, MORE OF THE GOOD STUFF OPEN NH FLAT RACE

1Bresilant	V Williams	11-0	Shane Quinlan (5)
2Forest Echo	C Gordon	11-0	Harriet Tucker (7)
342-4Galudon	31 H Whittington	11-0	D Jacob
4Hero	O Murphy	11-0	A Coleman
522Knowsley Road	78 (BF) P Nicholls	11-0	L Williams
6Robinsville C	Tizzard	11-0	B J Powell
7Lastordersplease	L Horsfall	10-7	Charlie Price (3)
8Jack Sprat	J Snowden	10-4	G Sheehan

Betting: 7-4 Knowsley Road, 4-1 Galudon, 5-1 Hero, 6-1 Robinsville, 10-1 Bresilant, Jack Sprat, 12-1 Forest Echo, 33-1 Lastordersplease

1cSweeney, 11-4; 2 Boasty (6-5 fav); 3 Pilot Wings (9-1). 10 ran. **NR:** Just Albert, Simply Sin, Nk, 1¼l, R Menzies. **Total:** £3.75; £1.50, £1.10, £2.50. **Exacta:** £7.70. **CSF:** £6.36. **Tricast:** £24.21. **Trifecta:** £34.60

5.30 (1m 1f 104yd) 1 Lenny's Spirit (R Coakley, 3-1); 2 Nine Elms (5-1); 3 Uther Pendragon (5-1). 11 ran. **NR:** Strategic Fortune. 1l, ¼l, E A L Dunlop. **Total:** £4.00; £1.50, £1.80, £1.70. **Exacta:** £21.30. **CSF:** £18.78. **Tricast:** £74.94. **Trifecta:** £94.00

6.00 (6f 20yd) 1 Acrion (Thomas Greatrex, 10-11 fav); 2 Western Melody (20-1); 3 General Sago (5-4). 5 ran. Nk, 1¼l, B J Meehan. **Total:** £1.91; £1.10, £6.60. **Exacta:** £14.60. **CSF:** £18.60. **Trifecta:** £18.00

6.30 (5f 21yd) 1 Tone The Barone (R Coakley, Evens fav); 2 Highfield Princess (2-1); 3 Alligator Alley (20-1). 6 ran. ¼l, 2¼l, S C Williams. **Total:** £2.00; £1.10, £1.40. **Exacta:** £3.50. **CSF:** £3.20. **Trifecta:** £27.40

7.00 (1m 1f 104yd) 1 Lammam (Adam J McNamara, 9-1); 2 Precision Storm (4-1); 3 Fox Power (5-2 fav). 8 ran. 3l, ¼l, D Loughnane. **Total:** £10.00; £2.20, £1.40, £1.30. **Exacta:** £46.20. **CSF:** £45.78. **Tricast:** £118.80. **Trifecta:** £205.90

7.30 (7f 36yd) 1 Night Narcissus (L P Keniry, 5-2 fav); 2 Amber Island (3-1); 3 Cry Havoc (5-1). 6 ran. ¼l, nk, C G Cox. **Total:** £3.50; £1.60, £1.80. **Exacta:** £9.30. **CSF:** £9.86.

8.00 (1m 14yd) 1 Headora (Charlie Bennett, 12-1); 2 Harbour Vision (7-2 fav); 3 Local Bay (6-1). 11 ran. Hd, nk, J G Portman. **Total:** £13.00; £3.50, £1.80, £2.60. **Exacta:** £66.40. **CSF:** £54.85. **Tricast:** £287.29. **Trifecta:** £619.90

8.30 (1m 14yd) 1 Weloof (Grace McEntee, 11-2); 2 Calonne (9-2); 3 Back From Dubai (10-1). 11 ran. 1l, 1¼l, J Butler. **Total:** £6.50; £2.70, £1.70, £3.40. **Exacta:** £41.90. **CSF:** £31.19. **Tricast:** £250.60. **Trifecta:** £388.00

Placepot: £9.60 Quadpot: £5.10

ELECTRIC FA CUP ACTION

THE ONLY PLACE TO HEAR ALL THREE FA CUP QUARTER FINALS

CRYSTAL PALACE v EVERTON

FROM 12:00 (12:30 K.O.)

SOUTHAMPTON v MANCHESTER CITY

FROM 14:30 (15:00 K.O.)

NOTTINGHAM FOREST v LIVERPOOL

FROM 17:00 (18:00 K.O.)

ANATOMY OF ...POPPY CLEALL

Named 2021 Women's Six Nations player of the tournament, the England forward is preparing for this year's competition, which begins on Saturday.

by Jessica Hayden

FACTFILE

Age	29
Height	5ft 8in
Weight	14 st 8 lbs (94kg)
Club	Saracens
Position	Second row/back row
Country	England
Caps	50

TRAINING DAY

Speed work and explosiveness are key factors to focus on in the build-up to an international, with the training sessions designed to match the intensity of Test rugby. "I wake up sore in the morning," Cleall says. In previous years, there has been a day for heavy lifting in the gym (Tuesday), a speed day (Wednesday), contact training and an internal game (Thursday) and a rest day on Friday.

IT'S AT WINNING

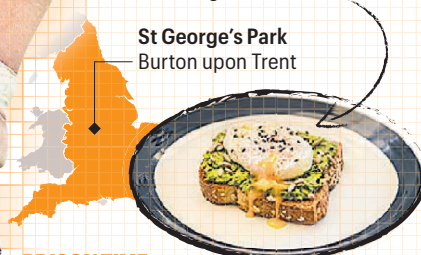
Poppy and her twin sister, Bryony, are both professional rugby players for England, having begun playing together when they were six years old. The pair played together for England for the first time at the 2021 Six Nations. There are a number of twins who play professional rugby – such as England's Tom and Ben Curry and the South Africans Dan and Jesse Kriel – but the Clealls are the only set of female twins playing professional rugby. "The only reason I've got to where I have is because I'm so competitive with Bryony," Poppy says.



BY GEORGE, THE FOOD'S GOOD

England have had two camps at St George's Park, in Burton upon Trent. "It's where the England footballers train," Cleall says. "The facilities we usually use are world class but this was incredible. They have a treadmill in a swimming pool that raises up and down and has cameras all around so you can see how you run."

Another highlight was the food. Breakfast is collagen jelly – which all the players must eat – and then a choice of baked oats, overnight oats, poached eggs, avocado and other healthy options. The players are not given set meals during the day, but are instead offered a variety of protein sources, carbohydrates and healthy fats at each meal time. As well as meals and regular snacks, they often drink smoothies and protein shakes to help them consume enough calories to match their energy expenditure during intense training sessions.



St George's Park
Burton upon Trent

PRISON TIME

Cleall made her debut for England while still working for the prison service, in a prison she has described as one of the most violent in the country. She signed a professional contract with the Red Roses in 2019.

LINEOUT CRASH LANDING

The versatile forward says her worst injury happened in 2017, just before the World Cup. Cleall broke her ankle on her way down from a lineout and was out of action for three months. However, she still made it to the tournament as an injury replacement and picked up a runners-up medal.

ENGLAND SCHEDULE IN THE WOMEN'S SIX NATIONS

Mar 26	Scotland (a), DAM Health Stadium
Apr 3	Italy (a), Stadio Sergio Lanfranchi
Apr 9	Wales (h), Kingsholm Stadium
Apr 24	Ireland (h), Welford Road
Apr 30	France (a), Stade Jean Daurer

All matches are live on BBC2 or BBC iPlayer

LESSONS FROM A LIFE IN SPORT

The former England bowler on training with Alan Shearer and that first ball in Brisbane



WHERE IT ALL BEGAN

My dad, Jimmy, was a footballer for Yeovil Town and Blyth Spartans and I was a centre half at Newcastle United's school of excellence. But Dad played for Bedlington Cricket Club too. I was the scorer and when someone didn't turn up, I'd get a game.

MY BREAKTHROUGH MOMENT

The Durham coach Geoff Cook saw me playing for Northumberland Under-17 and asked who I was. My coaches said, "He's not interested, he only plays five games a year." Six weeks later I'd made my first-class debut for Durham and was on the plane to Pakistan with England Under-19.

THE COACH I LOOKED UP TO

Geoff Cook, the most amazing man in the world. He was the first person to see me and believe in me. Durham's ground should be named after him.

MY CHILDHOOD HERO

Alan Shearer. He's a friend now, but my dad and Alan's, Old Alan, worked in the same factory for 20 years and neither would tell anybody else what their sons had been doing.

CRICKET NEVER GOT ANY BETTER THAN...

Winning the 2008 County Championship with Durham at Canterbury. I took the winning wicket, but we didn't know we'd won the title until we heard Nottinghamshire had lost when we were halfway home. That journey was something else.

MORNING I HAD THE HANGOVER TO END ALL HANGOVERS

To be honest, most mornings of my 18-year career. At Northampton, when I was young and stupid, we were rained off at 2pm. We said we'd drink until it stopped. It was still raining at 3am. At 10.45am the next day we went out to play. I nearly fell down the stairs – I was still drunk. At 10.55am it started to rain again, and all my Christmases had come at once. At 3pm we restarted and won. The coach said: "You're one lucky boy."

MY FAVOURITE GROUND

Lord's. The food is the best. It wasn't the most comfortable place to bowl, but I always did well. It's not great that you can only get four people on the balcony, but the history makes it special.

MY LEAST FAVOURITE GROUND

Derby wasn't great, but it has improved. Unlike Grace Road, Leicester...

MY TOUGHEST OPPONENT

My wife, Hayley. We've been married for nearly 25 years. We've got four children and a granddaughter. She's the most inspiring person I've ever met. I was hardly there for any of my kids. She's kept the whole unit together.

I LEARNT MOST FROM...

For five years I trained with Newcastle United, without



Shearer was a key influence

anybody knowing. I saw how Shearer and Gary Speed prepared. I got to know about eating habits and the dark side of professional sport. I talked to them about what people such as Derek Pringle [the former England cricketer turned journalist] were writing about me and how to come out the other side. An amazing experience.

MOST EMBARRASSING MOMENT

The wide ball that opened the 2006-07 Ashes in Brisbane. I tried too hard, it was as simple as that. I wasn't up to speed. My brain was telling me to bowl as hard as I could, but my action was nowhere near right. It was like trying to drive a car away in fifth gear.

MY BIGGEST REGRET

Not retiring in 2009, after winning the Ashes. I should never have gone back to first-class cricket with no goal of an international return. It was

YOUR NEXT DOWNLOAD

SPORT'S STRANGEST CRIMES: THE TRILLION DOLLAR CONMAN BBC SOUNDS

If it sounds too good to be true, it probably is. In 2009, the financially strapped Notts County were purchased by the mysterious Munto Finance. The earth was promised: Sven-

Goran Eriksson, Sol Campbell and Kasper Schmeichel were delivered. Behind the deal was Russell King, a former Marks & Spencer trainee manager and ex-convict, who wished to be referred to as Lord Voldemort. Signed on a five-year deal, Campbell played in a defeat away to Morecambe and fled, at a cost to Notts of



£250,000. On a jaunt paid for by the club, Eriksson found himself in Pyongyang, disappointing the North Korean

authorities by being unable to fix the 2010 World Cup draw. "They believed I didn't want to do it," the Swede says, chuckling. Today King is out of prison again but refused to contribute to these six podcast episodes, which feature fraudulent robberies of £600,000 cars, surreal cameos from Max Clifford and Boris Johnson and an unpaid milkman. Magnificent.

John Aizlewood

Football Results

SKY BET CHAMPIONSHIP

BRISTOL CITY 2 Wells 29 Weimann 85 HT: 1-0. Att: 20,586	WEST BROM 2 Ahearn-Grant 68 (pen) Reach 90+3
DERBY 1 Lawrence 67 (pen) HT: 0-1. Att: 24,264	COVENTRY 1 Godden 28
HUDDERSFIELD 0	BOURNEMOUTH 3 Anthony 19 Lerma 31 Solanke 47
HT: 0-2. Att: 20,336	
HULL 1 Eaves 90+2	LUTON 3 Adebayo 9 Cornick 56 Bree 72
HT: 0-1. Att: 16,555	
READING 1 Laurent 78 HT: 0-0	BLACKBURN 0
SHEFFIELD UTD 2 Berge 54 Gibbs-White 76 HT: 0-0. Att: 28,515	BARNSELY 0
STOKE 2 Brown 19 Saville 70 (og) HT: 1-0. Att: 20,526	MILLWALL 0
SWANSEA 0	BIRMINGHAM 0 HT: 0-0. Att: 18,620



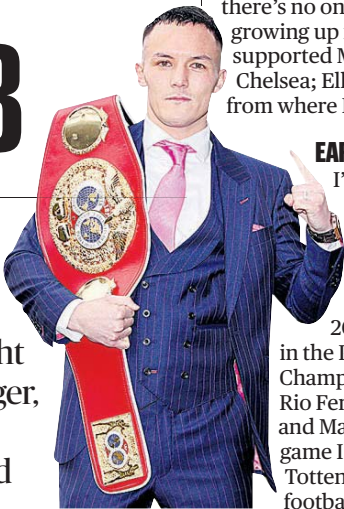
Josh Laurent celebrates scoring a late winner for Reading

NATIONAL LEAGUE

ALDERSHOT 0 HT: 0-1. Att: 1,660	KING’S LYNN TOWN 3 Linton 20, 56, Omotayo 90
BARNET 0 HT: 0-1	WOKING 2 Diarra 15, Loza 86
BOREHAM WOOD 0 HT: 0-0. Att: 1,670	GRIMSBY 0
BROMLEY 0 HT: 0-0	WREXHAM 0
CHESTERFIELD 1 Asante 76 HT: 0-0. Att: 5,518	MAIDENHEAD UTD 0
DAGENHAM & REDBRIDGE 1 Morias 5 HT: 1-1. Att: 1,846	NOTTS CO 2 Lacey 29, Wright 64 (og)
DOVER 0 HT: 0-1	YEOVIL 2 Barclay 19, Gorman 56
HALIFAX 2 Waters 60, McDonagh 71 HT: 0-0. Att: 2,192	TORQUAY 0
SOLI HULL MOORS 5 Sbarra 9, 40, 79, Howe 15 Newton 90+3 HT: 3-1. Att: 1,272	EASTLEIGH 3 Pitman 44 Hesketh 49, Whitehall 81
SOUTHEND 2 Ralph 35, Dennis 41 HT: 2-0. Att: 5,976	ALTRINCHAM 0
STOCKPORT COUNTY 4 Madden 55 (pen), Johnson 57 Palmer 61, Sarcevic 90 HT: 0-2. Att: 7,453	WEALDSTONE 2 Cook 13 Henry 33

MY CLUB

Boxer Josh Warrington, the IBF featherweight title challenger, on loving Leeds United



WHY LEEDS UNITED?

Leeds is a one-club city. If you’re born in Leeds, you support Leeds – there’s no one else. When I was growing up no one from Leeds supported Manchester United or Chelsea; Elland Road is five miles from where I lived.

EARLIEST MEMORIES

I’ve got two younger brothers, so as a kid we went to Elland Road whenever my dad could afford to take us. We started going in 2000-01, when we were in the Premier League and Champions League; we had Rio Ferdinand, Alan Smith and Mark Viduka. The first game I went to was against Tottenham; we got the football special [bus], and I

LEAGUE ONE

Rotherham United have been commanding leaders, having won eight of their past 12 league games, but were outplayed by lowly Shrewsbury Town, who deserved their 3-0 away win (Peter Wilson writes). Daniel Udoh fired the away side in front in the 36th minute just before Rotherham’s Angus MacDonald was sent off. Elliott Bennett doubled the lead, with Ryan Bowman adding a third in stoppage-time .

That defeat leaves Wigan Athletic only one point adrift of Rotherham but with two games in hand. They beat Morecambe 4-1. Wigan were two up by half-time through Josh Magennis and Jason Kerr. Dylan Connolly replied with a penalty, but a Will Keane header, his 20th goal of the season, and Stephen Humphrys’s volley sent Morecambe to a 12th match without a win. MK Dons made it 12 games without defeat – nine of them won. Warren O’Hora’s strike was enough for a 1-0 win away to Cambridge United. Plymouth Argyle moved up to fourth after a fifth straight win – their ninth in 11

CAMBRIDGE UTD 0 HT: 0-0. Att: 6,325	MK DONS 1 O’Hora 60
CHARLTON 2 Washington 12, Blackett-Taylor 42 HT: 2-0. Att: 11,348	BURTON ALBION 0
CHELTENHAM 3 Wright 81, Lloyd 83, May 90+2 HT: 0-1. Att: 3,836	AFC WIMBLEDON 1 Rudoni 26
CREWE 0 HT: 0-0. Att: 5,985	BOLTON 1 Bakayoko 90
FLEETWOOD TOWN 0 HT: 0-0. Att: 3,146	DONCASTER 0
GILLINGHAM 0 HT: 0-0. Att: 7,433	SHEFFIELD WED 0
LINCOLN 0 HT: 0-0. Att: 10,346	SUNDERLAND 0
OXFORD UTD 1 McNally 90+5 HT: 0-0. Att: 11,029	IPSWICH 1 Celina 70
PLYMOUTH 4 Camara 12, Edwards 37 Ennis 64, Hardie 79 HT: 2-0. Att: 13,076	ACCRINGTON STANLEY 0
PORTSMOUTH 0 HT: 0-0. Att: 15,092	WYCOMBE 0
ROTHERHAM 0 HT: 0-1. Att: 9,253	SHREWSBURY 3 Udoh 36, Bennett 78 Bowman 90+2
WIGAN 4 Magennis 19, Kerr 44 Keane 67, Humphrys 68 HT: 2-0. Att: 10,072	MORECAMBE 1 Connolly 49 (pen)

1 Rotherham 39 24 8 7 64 25 39 80	P W D L F A GD Pts
2 Wigan 37 24 7 6 66 34 32 79	
3 MK Dons 39 22 10 7 64 38 26 76	
4 Plymouth 38 21 8 9 64 39 25 71	
5 Oxford Utd 39 20 9 10 74 49 25 69	
6 Sunderland 39 19 10 10 66 48 18 67	
7 Sheff Wed 38 18 12 8 60 41 19 66	
8 Wycombe 39 18 12 9 62 47 15 66	
9 Ipswich 39 16 13 10 58 40 18 61	
10 Portsmouth 38 16 11 11 53 39 14 59	
11 Bolton 39 17 7 15 60 49 11 58	
12 Cheltenham 38 12 14 12 55 61 -6 50	
13 Accrington 38 14 8 16 47 63 -16 50	
14 Burton Albion 39 13 8 18 48 60 -12 47	
15 Charlton 38 13 7 18 45 49 -4 46	
16 Shrewsbury 39 11 12 16 40 37 3 45	
17 Cambridge Utd 38 11 12 15 46 59 -13 45	
18 Lincoln City 38 11 9 18 43 51 -8 42	
19 Fleetwood 38 7 13 18 50 67 -17 34	
20 Gillingham 39 7 13 19 29 59 -30 34	
21 AFC Wimbledon 38 6 15 17 40 61 -21 33	
22 Morecambe 39 7 11 21 47 79 -32 32	
23 Doncaster 39 8 6 25 28 73 -45 30	
24 Crewe 39 6 7 26 30 71 -41 25	



Batty was a “different animal”

LEAGUE TWO

Brandon Thomas-Asante scored a hat-trick as Salford City’s late push for promotion moved up a gear with the 5-1 thrashing of bottom club Scunthorpe United. It stretched their unbeaten run to eight matches.

Matt Smith headed the opener, with Stephen Kelly also on target. Joe Nuttall had pulled it back to 2-1 midway through the second half, but the defeat was their 13th in 16 games. Exeter City won for the ninth time in 13 games, 2-0 away to Oldham Athletic, to move into second place. Kyle Taylor headed the opener before Oldham’s Sam Hart had a spot-kick saved by Cameron Dawson. Despite having the



Thomas-Asante scored a hat-trick

substitute Nigel Atangana sent off in stoppage time, Exeter had time for Jevani Brown to score a second. Exeter go above Northampton Town, who lost 1-0 at home to Bristol Rovers. Although Joey Barton’s side had won seven of their previous nine games, only one of those victories had been against teams in the top half of the table. That changed against Northampton, as Harry Anderson’s goal after 38

seconds sent Rovers into fourth place. Tranmere Rovers dropped to fifth after a 1-1 draw away to Sutton. Ben Goodliffe gave the home side a 15th-minute lead, but Josh Hawkes equalised in the second half. Mark Hughes’s Bradford City were unable to win a third successive match. They lost 2-1 at home to Port Vale, won did make it three wins in a row. Leyton Orient won for the first time in 16 league games, 3-1 against Rochdale. It was a first success for the new manager, Richie Wellens. The substitute Calum Kavanagh’s stoppage-time header helped Harrogate Town to a 1-1 draw with Walsall.

BARROW 1 Banks 78 HT: 0-1. Att: 4,658	CARLISLE 2 Gibson 32 Dennis 75
BRADFORD CITY 1 Vernam 70 HT: 0-0. Att: 16,046	PORT VALE 2 Garrity 50 Wilson 63
CRAWLEY TOWN 3 Appiah 29 Nichols 72 Hutchinson 90+1 HT: 1-0. Att: 2,977	SWINDON 1 Davison 50
HARROGATE TOWN 1 Kavanagh 90+4 HT: 0-0. Att: 2,570	WALSALL 1 Wilkinson 60 (pen)
LEYTON ORIENT 3 Smyth 40 Sotiriou 58 Smith 80 HT: 1-1. Att: 4,791	ROCHDALE 1 Newby 6
NORTHAMPTON 0 HT: 0-1. Att: 6,405	BRISTOL ROVERS 1 Anderson 1
OLDHAM 0 HT: 0-0. Att: 5,111	EXETER 2 Taylor 52, Brown 90+6
SALFORD 5 Smith 17 Thomas-Asante 45, 67, 81 Kelly 77 HT: 2-0. Att: 1,972	SCUNTHORPE 1 Nuttall 61
SUTTON UTD 1 Goodliffe 15 HT: 1-0. Att: 3,366	TRANMERE 1 Hawkes 68

1 Forest Green 36 19 12 5 65 32 33 69	P W D L F A GD Pts
2 Exeter 36 17 13 6 54 35 19 64	
3 Northampton 38 18 9 11 45 33 12 63	
4 Bristol Rovers 38 18 9 11 53 42 11 63	
5 Tranmere 38 18 9 11 44 33 11 63	
6 Newport Co 38 17 11 10 62 49 13 62	
7 Swindon 38 17 10 11 62 48 14 61	
8 Port Vale 36 16 11 9 55 36 19 59	
9 Sutton Utd 37 16 10 11 55 43 12 58	
10 Mansfield 34 16 8 10 47 40 7 56	
11 Salford 36 14 11 11 44 33 11 53	
12 Hartlepool 37 14 9 14 39 48 -9 51	
13 Crawley Town 37 13 9 15 47 53 -6 48	
14 Walsall 38 12 11 15 41 49 -8 47	
15 Bradford City 38 11 13 14 43 47 -4 46	
16 Harrogate 37 11 11 15 53 58 -5 44	
17 Carlisle 37 11 10 16 33 50 -17 43	
18 Leyton Orient 36 8 16 12 46 38 8 40	
19 Rochdale 36 8 16 12 41 49 -8 40	
20 Colchester 37 9 12 16 36 51 -15 39	
21 Barrow 37 8 13 16 33 43 -10 37	
22 Stevenage 37 7 13 17 33 58 -25 34	
23 Oldham 36 7 10 19 35 56 -21 31	
24 Scunthorpe 38 4 12 22 26 68 -42 24	

FAVOURITE PLAYER

David Batty or “The Chief”, Lucas Radebe. From today’s team, Kalvin Phillips, a local talent. Smith was one of my favourites until he started kissing Man United’s badge. Batty was no-nonsense and loved a challenge; as I’ve got older I’ve met him, and the stories his agent has told me, about him not giving a f*** . . . In training he’d toss it off, but on match days he was a different animal, and I loved that.

LEAST FAVOURITE PLAYER

There was an Italian under Cellino, Mirco Antenucci, who just couldn’t be arsed. Diabolical. He shouldn’t have been wearing the shirt.

PREMIER LEAGUE WEEK 30

		Total						Home						Away						GD	Pts
		P	W	D	L	F	A	P	W	D	L	F	A	P	W	D	L	F	A		
1	Man City	29	22	4	3	68	18	14	11	1	2	40	10	15	11	3	1	28	8	50	70
2	Liverpool	29	21	6	2	75	20	14	11	3	0	37	7	15	10	3	2	38	13	55	69
3	Chelsea	28	17	8	3	57	19	13	7	5	1	28	10	15	10	3	2	29	9	38	59
4	Arsenal	28	17	3	8	44	31	15	10	2	3	24	12	13	7	1	5	20	19	13	54
5	Man Utd	29	14	8	7	48	40	15	8	3	4	24	18	14	6	5	3	24	22	8	50
6	West Ham	29	14	6	9	48	36	15	8	3	4	27	20	14	6	3	5	21	16	12	48
7	Tottenham	28	15	3	10	44	35	13	8	1	4	23	15	15	7	2	6	21	20	9	48
8	Wolverhampton	30	14	4	12	31	26	15	6	2	7	16	15	15	8	2	5	15	11	5	46
9	Aston Villa	29	11	3	15	41	40	14	5	3	6	24	21	15	6	0	9	17	19	1	36
10	Southampton	29	8	11	10	36	45	15	5	7	3	20	14	14	3	4	7	16	31	-9	35
11	Crystal Palace	29	7	13	9	39	38	15	4	7	4	22	17	14	3	6	5	17	21	1	34
12	Leicester	26	9	6	11	40	45	13	6	3	4	22	18	13	3	3	7	18	27	-5	33
13	Brighton	29	7	12	10	26	36	15	3	5	7	10	20	14	4	7	3	16	16	-10	33
14	Newcastle	29	7	10	12	32	49	14	4	6	4	20	25	15	3	4	8	12	24	-17	31
15	Brentford	29	8	6	15	32	45	15	5	2	8	16	19	14	3	4	7	16	26	-13	30
16	Leeds	30	7	8	15	34	67	15	4	4	7	17	29	15	3	4	8	17	38	-33	29
17	Everton	27	7	4	16	29	47	14	6	1	7	19	19	13	1	3	9	10	28	-18	25
18	Watford	29	6	4	19	29	55	14	2	1	11	14	34	15	4	3	8	15	21	-26	22
19	Burnley	27	3	12	12	22	38	13	2	6	5	10	16	14	1	6	7	12	22	-16	21
20	Norwich	29	4	5	20	18	63	15	2	3	10	10	31	14	2	2	10	8	32	-45	17

PREMIER LEAGUE, FA CUP AND SCOTLAND

Premier League	
ASTON VILLA 0	ARSENAL 1 Saka 30
HT: 0-1. Att: 41,956	
FA Cup: Quarter-final	
MIDDLESBROUGH 0	CHELSEA 2 Lukaku 15, Ziyech 31
HT: 0-2. Att: 31,422	
Cinch Scottish Premiership	
ABERDEEN 3	HIBERNIAN 1 Ferguson 37 (pen), 64 (pen) Ramsay 20 (og) Besuijen 80
HT: 1-1. Att: 15,321. Sent off: Porteous (Hibs) 63	
CELTIC 4	ROSS COUNTY 0 Giakoumakis 11, 18, 61 (pen) Maeda 26
HT: 3-0. Sent off: Ramsay (Ross County) 28	
HEARTS 2	LIVINGSTON 0 Baningime 3, McKay 58
HT: 1-0. Att: 17,957	
ST JOHNSTONE 2	MOTHERWELL 1 Hendry 21, 90+1 Van Veen 12
HT: 1-1	
ST MIRREN 1	DUNDEE UTD 2 Henderson 3 Levitt 57, McNulty 90+6
HT: 1-0. Att: 5,710. Sent off: Alnwick (St Mirren) 89	

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Celtic	31	24	4	3	69	18	76
Rangers	30	21	7	2	60	24	70
Hearts	31	15	8	8	44	31	53
Dundee Utd	31	10	9	12	28	34	39
Hibernian	31	9	10	12	29	33	37
Livingston	31	10	7	14	33	40	37
Ross County	31	9	9	13	43	51	36
Motherwell	31	9	9	13	32	46	36
St Mirren	31	8	12	11	28	42	36
Aberdeen	31	9	8	14	36	39	35
St Johnstone	31	6	9	16	20	37	27
Dundee	30	5	8	17	24	51	23
Cinch Championship							
ARBROATH 1							AYR 0
Hamilton 50							
HT: 0-0. Att: 1,727. Sent off: Ashford (Ayr) 78							
KILMARNOCK 2							QUEEN OF SOUTH 1
Taylor 42, Shaw 81							Roy 66
HT: 1-0. Att: 4,074							
PARTICK 0							HAMILTON 4
Ryan 19, 50, Moyo 45+1, Winter 63							
HT: 0-2. Att: 2,567							
RAITH 2							INVERNESS CT 3
Connolly 13							Sutherland 27
Poplatnik 30							Chalmers 89, 90+2
HT: 2-1. Att: 1,591							
Sent off: Benedictus 71, Williamson 90+4 (both Raith)							

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Kilmarnock	30	17	5	8	41	21	56
Arbroath	30	14	12	4	41	22	54
Inverness CT	30	12	10	8	41	29	46
Partick	29	12	9	8	41	30	45
Raith	30	10	12	8	37	37	42
Morton	30	8	11	11	33	40	35
Hamilton	30	8	11	11	35	45	35
Ayr	30	8	8	14	30	44	32
Queen of the South	30	6	8	16	30	44	26
Dunfermline	29	4	14	11	27	44	26
League One Airdrieonians 2 Queen's Park 0; Alloa 1 Peterhead 0; Clyde 2 East Fife 0; Dumbarton 0 Falkirk 2; Montrose 1 Cove Rangers 2.							
	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Cove Rangers	30	19	8	3	62	28	65
Airdrieonians	30	18	6	6	54	31	60
Montrose	30	13	12	5	44	27	51
Queen's Park	30	9	16	5	45	30	43
Falkirk	30	11	7	12	44	45	40
Clyde	30	8	12	10	36	49	36
Alloa	30	8	9	13	37	49	35
Peterhead	30	7	7	16	37	48	28
Dumbarton	30	7	5	18	40	63	26
East Fife	30	5	8	17	28	57	23
League Two Albion 0 Forfar 0; Cowdenbeath 1 Stenhousemuir 1; Elgin 0 Kelly Hearts 0; Stirling Albion 0 Annan Athletic 3.							

UP FOR THE CUP

Research: Alec McQuarrie

Liverpool play Nottingham Forest in today's last FA Cup quarter-final. Having won the Carabao Cup last month, they are bidding become the first team to do the League and FA Cup double in two separate seasons

FA Cup and League Cup double



	Arsenal
	Liverpool

	Chelsea
	Manchester City



Second in the Premier League, Liverpool also have a chance of completing their second FA Cup and League title double — 36 years after their first

FA Cup and League title double



	Arsenal
	Manchester Utd

	Preston
	Aston Villa
	Tottenham

	Liverpool
	Chelsea
	Manchester City

Also in the quarter-finals of the Champions League next month, the Reds could record a domestic and European double for the fifth time

Domestic and European 'doubles'



- **1972-73** – League; Uefa Cup
- **1975-76** – League; Uefa Cup
- **1976-77** – League; European Cup
- **1980-81** – League Cup; European Cup
- **1983-84** – League; LC; European Cup
- **2000-01** – FA Cup; LC; Uefa Cup



- **1998-99** – League; FA Cup; CL
- **2007-08** – League; CL
- **2016-17** – LC; Europa League



- **1967-68** – LC; Inter-Cities Fairs Cup



- **1978-79** – LC; European Cup

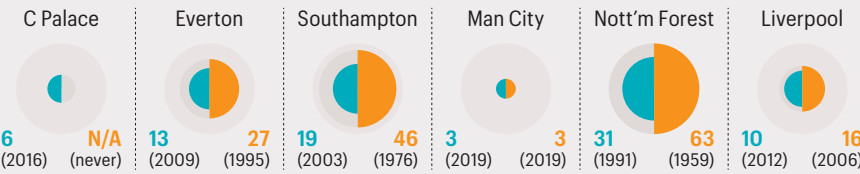


- **1984-85** – League; Cup Winners' Cup

It is a decade since Liverpool last reached an FA Cup final and the last time they lifted the trophy was 16 years ago. Forest have not been in the final for more than 30 years and last won it in 1959.

Years since today's quarter-finalists' last FA Cup final ...

● Appearance ● Win



GENERAL RESULTS

CRICKET

Women's World Cup, group stage (Auckland): *Australia (2pts) won by six wickets:* India 277-7 (50 overs: M D Raj 66, Y H Bhatia 59, H B Kaur 57no); Australia 280-4 (49.3 overs: M M Lanning 97, A J Healy 72).

	P	W	L	T	Pts	NRR
Australia	5	5	0	0	10	1.42
South Africa	4	4	0	0	8	0.22
West Indies	5	3	2	0	6	-0.93
India	5	2	3	0	4	0.46
New Zealand	5	2	3	0	4	-0.21
England	4	1	3	0	2	0.35
Bangladesh	4	1	3	0	2	-0.34
Pakistan	4	0	4	0	0	-1.00

GOLF

US PGA Tour Valspar Championship (Palm Harbor, Florida): **Leaders after two rounds** (US unless stated): **128** M NeSmith 67 61, **130** A Hadwin (Can) 64 66, **131** S Burns 64 67, S Stallings 65 66, **132** J Thomas 66 66, **133** D Riley 65 68, **134** X Schauffele 67 67, W Simpson 67 67, B Harman 67 67, **135** T Merritt 68 67, L Oosthuizen (SA) 67 68, J Vegas (Ven) 64 71, R Werenski 65 70, G Woodland 67 68, S Cink 67 68, M Fitzpatrick (Eng) 67 68, M Kaymer 69 66, T Fleetwood (Eng) 67 68, D Lipsky 64 71, **136** J Bramlett 69 67, K Kisner 70 66, P Kizzire 69 67, K Steelman 67 69, T Hatton (Eng) 68 68.

Women's Aramco Saudi International (King Abdullah Economic City): **Leaders after three rounds** (GB and Ire unless stated): **206** G Hall 69 69 68, **211** A Nordqvist (Swe) 70 72 69, **212** K Napoleova (Cz) 72 66 74, J Gustavsson (Swe) 71 74 67, **213** S Kyriacou (Aus) 75 66 72, A van Dam (Neth) 71 69 73, **214** C Noja (SA) 71 74 69, C Ciganda (Sp) 73 71 70, C Frankish 74 69 71, N Garcia (SA) 73 71 70, **216** E Pedersen (Den) 77 67 72, **217** A Yin (Un) 70 75 72, W Hillier (Aus) 74 71 72, E Arvidsson (Swe) 74 74 69, **218** L-A Pace (SA) 76 67 75, C Palomar-Herbin (Fr) 74 71 73, B Brewerton 72 72 74, H Burke 73 75 70, M Stavnar (Nor) 80 68 70.

RUGBY LEAGUE

Betfred Super League Toulouse 22 St Helens 20; Warrington Wolves 22 Wakefield Trinity 38.

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
St Helens	6	5	0	1	176	50	10
Catalans Dragons	6	5	0	1	112	82	10
Wigan	6	5	0	1	141	112	10
Huddersfield	5	4	0	1	150	74	8
Hull	5	3	0	2	127	107	6
Warrington	6	3	0	3	130	138	6
Salford	6	3	0	3	124	148	6
Hakefield	6	2	0	4	112	122	4
Hull KR	6	2	0	4	92	136	4
Leeds	6	1	0	5	90	141	2
Castleford	6	1	0	5	115	180	2
Toulouse	6	1	0	5	100	179	2

Comment

David Walsh

There are 800 versions of *The Fields of Athenry* but few would have resonated more than the rendition performed on the eve of a wonderful Gold Cup day for Ireland



Last weekend, Pete St John, 90, died in a Dublin hospital. St John wrote *The Fields of Athenry*, a ballad about the potato famine that has become Ireland’s unofficial anthem in the way that *Flower of Scotland* is for the Scots. You can listen to more than 800 versions of *The Fields of Athenry* on YouTube but perhaps the most extraordinary rendition was delivered at a football stadium in Gdansk ten years ago. That was the summer of the 2012 Euros, hosted by Ukraine and Poland. On a Thursday evening in Gdansk, Spain thrashed Ireland 4-0 in their group C game, a defeat that ended Ireland’s time at the finals. For the final six minutes of the game, Ireland’s fans thunderously sang *The Fields of Athenry*. It sounded plaintive and yet appreciative. In his role as co-commentator for French television, Arsène Wenger asked the commentator to stop speaking so their viewers could just listen to the singing. Spain’s World Cup-winning manager Vicente del Bosque said something daft but lovely about the singing being “what the game was really about”. More than 500 performers have covered *The Fields of Athenry* but Paddy Reilly’s is the definitive version. Reilly is now 82 and attended St John’s funeral in Dublin on Monday. After that he went to Cheltenham with his son Ciaran. They stayed at the Ellenborough Park, a classy, old-world hotel a couple of miles north of the racecourse. Also staying at the Ellenborough

was the Festival’s leading trainer, Willie Mullins, and his wife, Jackie. Reilly once had horses in training with Paddy Mullins, Willie’s father. Paddy and Ciaran now have one in training with Willie. Michael Carrick, the former Manchester United and England midfielder, was another Ellenborough guest, as he and his brother Graeme had taken their dad, Vince, to the Festival to celebrate his 70th birthday. After dinner on Thursday, the Mullins, the Reillys, the Carricks and friends assembled in the hotel bar. One drink followed another, conversation flowed and anyone who asked Willie Mullins about his chances of having a winner the next day were astonished by the answer. “I think we’ve got really good chances in every race,” Mullins said, as if he were expecting three or even four winners on Gold Cup day. As it turned out, he had five. The highlight of the night came after someone told Paddy Reilly that it was Vince Carrick’s 70th birthday and wondered if there was any way Reilly might sing *The Fields of Athenry* to mark the occasion. Reilly is now at that point in his life where he doesn’t just break into song because some punter asks. But this being Michael Carrick’s father, on his 70th, Reilly sang the song and stilled the bar. Willie Mullins stayed till the death. He thinks it was about 2.30am when he turned in but who could be sure at that hour. Some extraordinary things happened at Cheltenham. In the first race of the meeting, the Supreme Novices’ Hurdle, a five-year-old trained by Nicky Henderson

delivered the most spectacular performance of the week. In only his third race, Constitution Hill pulverised a select group of rivals and offered us something we had not seen since another sensational novice, Golden Cygnet, won the same race in 1978. Over the same distance and on the same day, Constitution Hill was almost six seconds faster than the now dual Champion Hurdler Honeysuckle. Without needing to be driven or even pushed Constitution Hill won by 22 lengths. “You’re going to have to deal with him next year,” Patrick Mullins warned Honeysuckle’s trainer Henry de Bromhead later in the day. Mullins had ridden the talented Kilcruit against Constitution Hill and although he tried, he couldn’t get anywhere near his rival. De Bromhead and his jockey, Rachael Blackmore, also had an excellent week. Honeysuckle returned to the scene of her greatest triumph in good shape ready to defend her Champion Hurdle title, and with Blackmore riding even more assuredly than a year ago they went early and weren’t going to be caught. That Blackmore is even better than a year ago was evident in her riding of A Plus Tard in the Gold Cup. She sat like the coolest player at the poker



Blackmore celebrates Gold Cup success on A Plus Tard

Concussion protocols are too easy to abuse – change is needed now

It seems rugby is giving up on concussion. In this Six Nations Championship there has been a retreat back to the bad old days of concussed players being encouraged to get up and get on with it. Kyle Sinckler’s involvement in England’s match day squad for yesterday evening’s game at the Stade de France was, at the very least, highly questionable. Early in the game against Ireland eight days ago, Sinckler went down after a collision and briefly lost consciousness. This, of course, was not the first time for England’s tight head prop to be knocked out in a high profile Test match. Sinckler’s head collided with Maro Itoje’s elbow early in the World Cup final against South Africa in 2019 and after losing consciousness, he went off. After being knocked out last weekend, Sinckler was replaced by Will Stuart. England’s management would later report that Sinckler failed his head injury assessment (HIA). According to the protocols, Sinckler should not have been given the HIA because it was clear he had lost consciousness. What’s the point of an HIA when it is clear the player has suffered a concussion? Of course, there was a point. As he had an HIA, Sinckler could then be put through the six-stage return-to-play protocol that created the possibility of him being available for England’s next game against France. And, to no one’s surprise, the player successfully negotiated all six stages of the return-to-play protocols. Eddie Jones, the England head coach, made the point that Sinckler didn’t really have a concussion, he was just knocked out. The same hurdles were cleared by the Wales prop Thomas Francis after he was concussed against England last month and he, too, was back for Wales’s next game against France, 13 days later. It is all so predictable and so wrong. Given what we now know about the effects of head injury in collision sports, this behaviour is shameful. Rugby has talked the talk about concussion and how player welfare is the number one priority. Given the six-stage return-to-play protocols and how they are being abused, player welfare is clearly not rugby’s priority. The protocols are not fit for purpose and they need to be changed. Not for next season but for next week. Rugby league recently changed its return-to-play protocols to better protect players. Union continues to play fast and loose with players’ brains.